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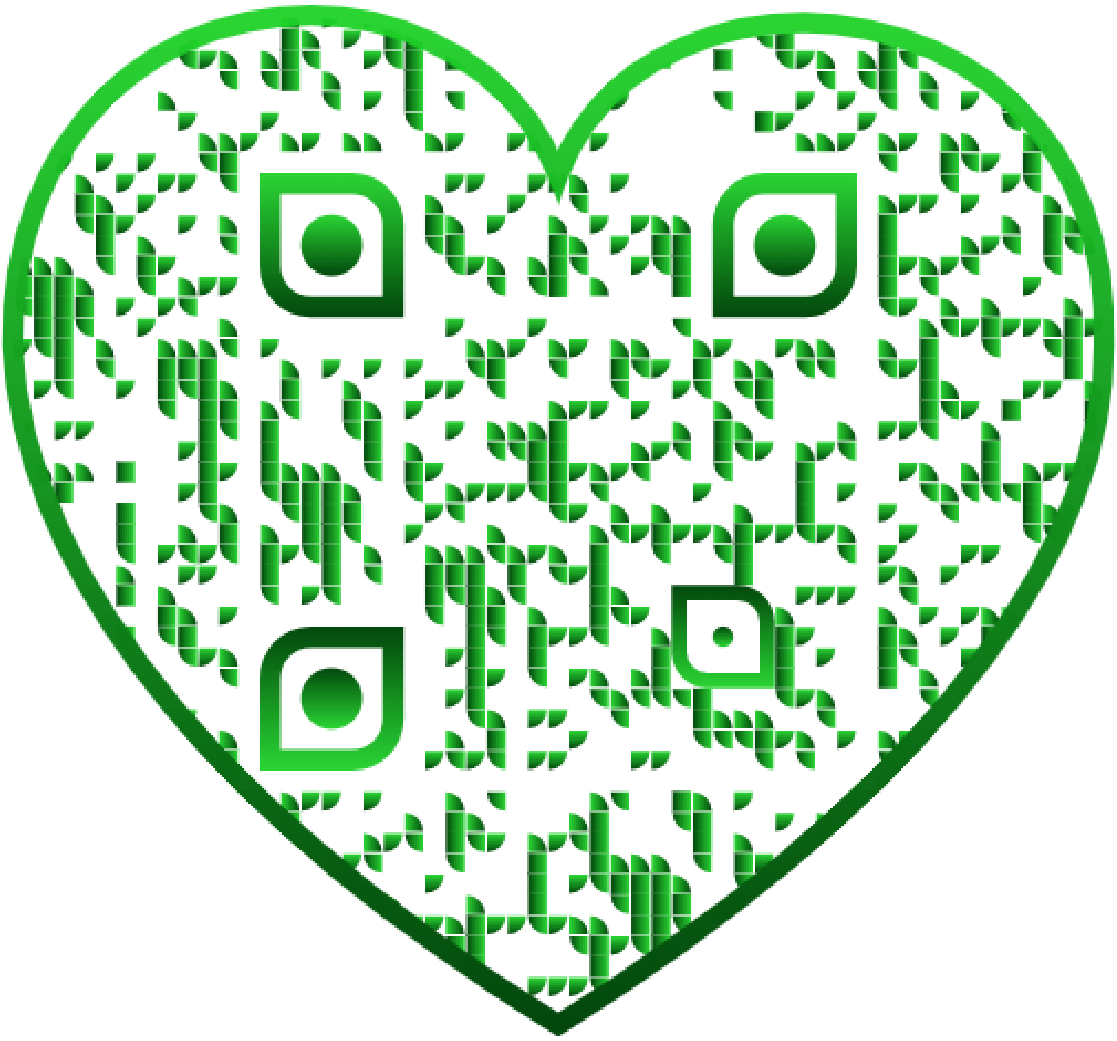

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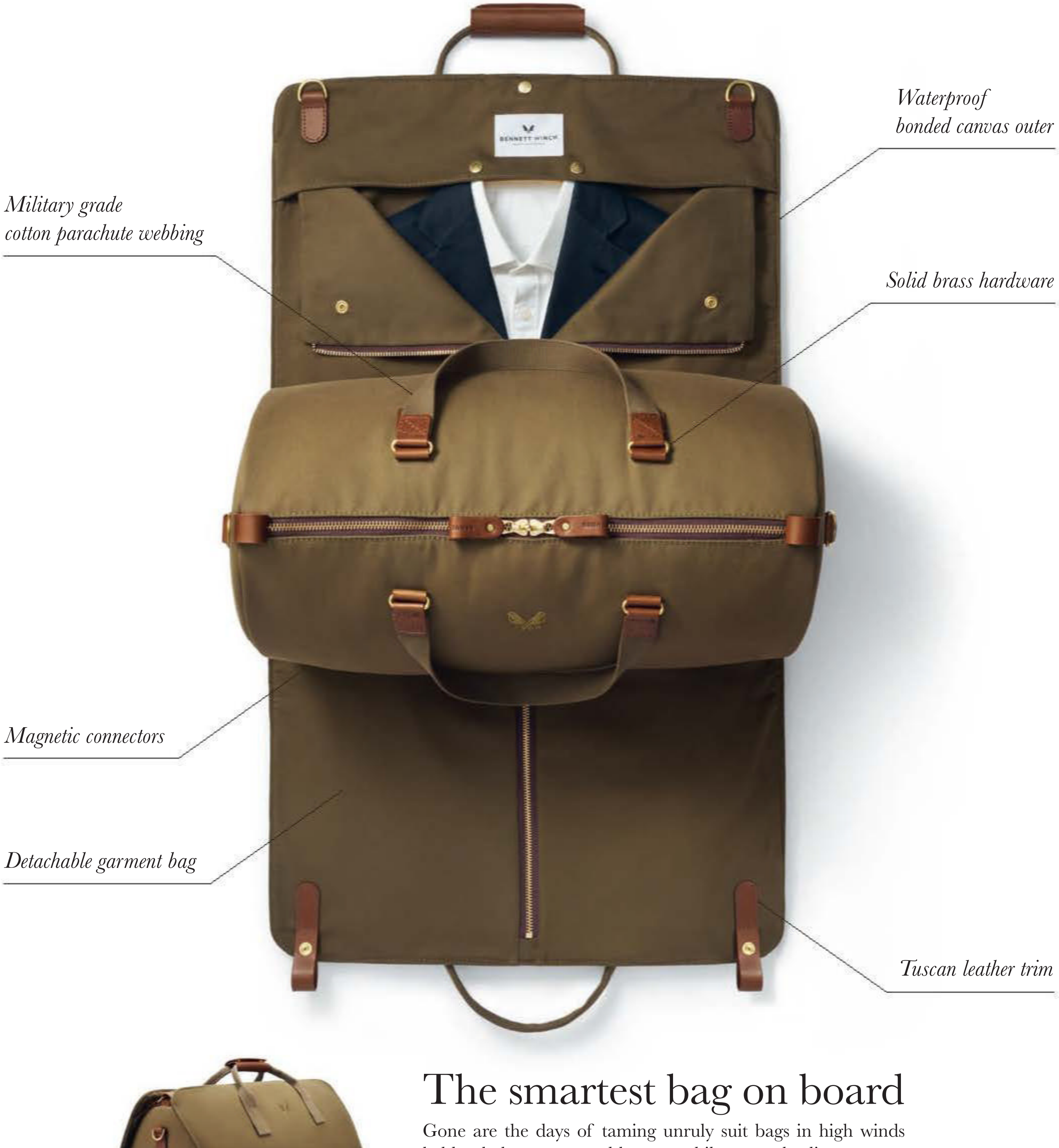
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BUSINESS TRAVELLER

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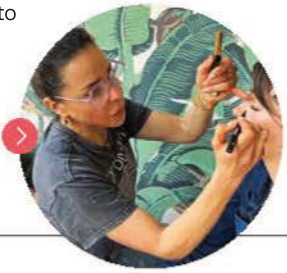

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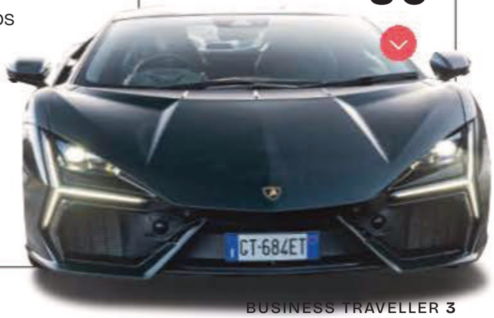

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COVER: ALAMY CONTENTS: COURTESY OF DELTA AIRLINES; JANE MCLEISH-KELSEY; CHARLIE MAGEE PHOTOGRAPHY; MATTHIEU SALVAING; OETKER COLLECTION; RICHARD COOK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

EDITOR'S LETTER

WELCOME TO THE summer issue. Our dreamy cover invites you to explore Ireland's spectacular Wild Atlantic Way, where the centuries-old tradition of seaweed harvesting is enjoying a vibrant revival. From natural wellness to windswept views, it's the perfect place for a summer getaway (page 60).

Speaking of embracing the wild outdoors, we're using the warmer summer months to plunge into the invigorating waters of wild swimming, another back-to-nature trend that's taking hold (page 32).

We also take off on the first-ever Wine Flyer x Avios chartered journey to San Sebastián, where world-class wine country meets Basque gastronomy – an experience entirely paid for by points (page 66).

Elsewhere in the issue, we unzip amenity kits to decide if these personal pouches are a waste of material – or coveted collectables (page 48). We also take a look at the functionality of modern cities, and how they are being reimagined for a post-Covid world (page 54). And we share insider strategies for how to snag those elusive reward flights (page 42).

It's also the last chance to cast your vote in the revamped *Business Traveller* awards – scan the QR code now to check out the new format, have your say and enter the prize draw. Voting closes on 31 August, 2025.

Tamsin Cocks

Tamsin Cocks
Editor

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BOYD FARROW
WRITER
Boyd writes about business and tech for publications including the *Financial Times*. On page 54, he looks at cities that have revitalised how residents live, from San Francisco to Berlin. He says: "It's inspiring to see so many cities being reimagined as healthier, greener places."

KATE BETTES
WRITER
Kate is an Australian journalist based in Berlin. Her writing has appeared in *BBC Travel*, *Business Insider*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Grazia* and more, and she loves to reveal the unexpected. In this issue, she takes us on a seaweed-themed adventure along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. Turn to page 60.

ENRIQUE PERRELLA
WRITER
Enrique is the aviation director at *Business Traveler* US, and has previously contributed to the likes of *CNN*, *The Washington Post* and *France 24*. In this issue, he reveals highlights of the new United Polaris (page 14) and interviews the CEO of Pittsburgh Airport on page 39.

ANOTHER DAY,
ANOTHER DESTINY
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SHINE THROUGH EVERY NOTE
AQUA SAPPHIRE
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THE VICTORIOUS

Inbox

Readers share first-hand knowledge, experiences and ideas

REWARD ROULETTE

I recently read the positive letter by Adrian Furnham about BA. My experience has been far from positive. When I retired, I wanted to treat my wife to a holiday in Japan with return business class flights. I had amassed almost 400,000 miles through business flights and my BA Amex credit card over a six-year period, and booked reward flights some ten months in advance. Weeks from flying, my wife was called forward to have a new hip. We gave BA a letter from the consultant confirming she should not fly during that period and were advised we could reschedule our flights. We spoke to several customer service people and were given conflicting advice – from, "you must book both legs within a month" to "I don't think there is a time limit". BA reward business class flights are a nightmare to find but eventually I found one for a year's time. When I came to book our return leg, I was told we'd exceeded our time limit and lost circa 200,000 miles and £550.

After a few attempts, a BA customer adviser owned the problem and sorted it. But I remain very dissatisfied with the lack of empathy and support shown by what was once a well-respected business.

Jeffrey Morgan, Shropshire

***BT* replies:** *We're glad your situation got resolved. Head to page 42 for tips on snagging reward flights.*

STAR LETTER

Travelling in style

I recently travelled from Heathrow with my daughter. We were a little early so popped into Sunglass Hut. The lady working there asked if we needed any help and I said we were just killing time before our flight. She knew that we weren't going to buy anything, but let my daughter try on multiple pairs of glasses, complimented her and made suggestions for other pairs to try. It absolutely made my daughter's day, and she felt very special. I'm not sure what the first rule of customer service is, but being warm, friendly, engaged and sincere really makes a difference.

Peter Baldacchino, Burnham, Berkshire

STAR PRIZE

This month's Star Letter writer will win a Gingerlily Silk Travel set in navy worth £235. Made from the finest mulberry silk, the travel set comprises a travel pillow, neck pillow and eye mask all presented with a silk laundry bag, a must-have accessory for any traveller. For your chance to win a prize, email editorial@businesstraveller.com and include your full postal address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

SLIDING INTO OUR DMs

Our followers share their thoughts on the 'Heightened emotions' column about crying on planes in the May 2025 issue

"This is so funny – I thought it was only me! Every plane without fail. The longer the haul, the more sobs." @chloeblows1

"I cried watching the documentary about F1 racing champion Aryton Senna – and I don't even drive!" @chrismdwyer

"The times I have been so embarrassed and had to hide my face. I've also ended up crying from laughter at stupid stuff on the IFE." @geepea

"I was watching *Forrest Gump* on a plane and cried so aggressively that the air hostess came over to ask if everything was okay." @emilyem_1

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK

FORUM

TURKEY TO FINE PASSENGERS FOR STANDING UP TOO EARLY

‘Strategy and crew training rather than a fine looks to the answer’

BACKOFTHEPLANE
It was recently in the news that Turkey is going to start fining passengers who get out of their seats before the aircraft has come to a complete stop at the gate. The new rules apply to all flights to Turkey. While I fully agree with the sentiment/intent, I can’t see this being enforced. Thoughts?

VIAJEROUK
I did four sectors on Turkish Airlines recently, and announcements were made on all flights about the fines. No one in my vicinity stood up, but the sound of unbuckling seat belts was audible.

MARTYNSINCLAIR
Perhaps for arrivals in Turkey the airline could impose fines, but for arrivals into other destinations, I wonder what legal basis the airline could fine passengers and how on earth could they enforce it.

DEREKVH
Asking passengers to remain seated and disembark by row number worked during Covid, so it’s not impossible to achieve. If they send a fine based on the seat number you simply respond and say you swapped seats with someone!

ASK1945A
A few years ago, I took the return journey from Malé to Colombo on Sri Lankan Airlines in a single-aisle plane. In both directions, passengers lined up all along the aisle as the plane touched down. There were no announcements to passengers to return to their seats.

LUGANOPIRATE
On Safair they deboard five rows at a time, with a flight attendant blocking the passage for passengers behind them. It works well and is a quicker (and nicer) way to disembark.

CWOODWARD
Proper strategy and crew training rather than a fine looks to be the answer to the problem endemic to some countries. My experience on the large, better Asian airlines is good, with little stampeding on landing, even in economy.

CASEY_99
Loved it some years ago when, just after touchdown, the crew announced, “In the entire history of aviation no passenger has ever beaten the plane to the terminal so please remain seated until the plane has fully stopped.” Everyone was then too embarrassed to stand up early.

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AVIATION
United unveils its new Polaris cabin

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Shifting attitudes and net-zero hotels

Dispatch

The latest business travel updates

@hunterjuggler

HOT TICKET

Edinburgh

The greatest show on Earth heads to town

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

IT'S FESTIVAL SEASON in Edinburgh, with the famous Fringe kicking off at the start of August. Visit this summer to enjoy well-known names and rising stars in over 3,000 shows spanning comedy, theatre, circus, spoken word events and concerts until 25 August.

Highlights include murder-mystery musical *The Detective's Demise* and *Shakespeare for Breakfast* (both showing until 24 August), plus acclaimed

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON,
JAMES LAROUNIS

Continued from previous page

comedian Nish Kumar is bringing his solo show *Nish, Don't Kill My Vibe* to the Gordon Aikman Theatre for the first ten days of the month.

For performances from more big names in the arts industry, the Edinburgh International Festival runs in parallel with the Fringe. Those visiting in July can get into the swing of things at the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival (11-20 July).

As for somewhere to stay, The Hoxton opened in the Scottish capital at the end of June, occupying 11 Georgian townhouses on Grosvenor Street – close to Haymarket train station. The trendy property features 214 rooms, with three self-contained houses set to open later this summer. Alternatively, YOTEL Edinburgh will put you in the centre of the action. During the Fringe, the budget hotel is hosting a daily flamenco performance called *Art of Andalucía* in its events space with 360-degree projections.

Foodies should also check out the city's new farm-to-table restaurant Moss, headed up by chef Henry Dobson (of Michelin-starred Noma fame), as well as neighbourhood bistro LeftField, which reopened in May with a new look and refreshed Mediterranean menu.

DID YOU KNOW?
The first Fringe took place in 1947, when eight theatre groups turned up uninvited to the Edinburgh International Festival and performed on the outskirts (or the fringes) of the event.

TOP: The Hoxton, Edinburgh
INSET: Burrata and tomatoes at LeftField

MEAT MARKET

Which airlines serve the best burgers in the air – and how do they do it?

THE BURGER HAS become an unlikely star in the skies, appearing in the premium cabins of airlines such as Delta, United, Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific. But pulling off an inflight burger is a complicated feat.

"It's very difficult," says Molly Brandt, executive innovation chef for North America at airline catering company Gate Gourmet – the world's largest airline catering company. "Would you ever buy a cheeseburger, refrigerate it and then reheat the whole thing in your oven at home? It's not impossible, but it's certainly not the best way to enjoy one."

"When you heat the patty and bun together, the bun might get crunchy and overdone, while the patty is just barely warm – or vice versa," Brandt says. She suggests separating components during heating and modifying the patty itself. "I'd add finely minced mushrooms – not enough to taste them, but enough to hold moisture and boost umami. Mushrooms are like sponges. They help the burger stay juicy, even after reheating."

Few airlines have cracked the code, but Delta's collaboration with Shake Shack is a success. Initially tested on select Boston flights, the ShackBurger has now expanded to more Delta hubs. Served with Shake Shack's signature sauce and a well-balanced bun, it mirrors the land version surprisingly well.

Not all inflight burgers hit the mark, however. In American Airlines' business class, I sampled sliders served in a cardboard box with soggy fries. Overcooked and underwhelming, it felt more like a missed opportunity than a comfort-food win. Some pre-order programmes yield better results. On Alaska Airlines, my burger came with crisp lettuce, tomato, pickles, a tangy sauce and toasted bun with no soggy surprises.

Still, fries remain a common downfall. "Reheated? They just don't work," says Brandt. Her advice: swap them out for Kettle crisps or baked sides that hold up better in galley ovens.

Ultimately, the burger's appeal is timeless – it's a comforting crowd-pleaser. And when prepared with the right components and techniques, it can still deliver satisfaction at altitude.

SHAKE SHACK
DARK CHOCOLATE BROWNIE

> 'Delta's partnership with Shake Shack is a notable success'

FROM TOP Delta Air Lines' Shake Shack burger; Alaska Airlines' pretzel roll sliders

IMAGES **DAVID MONTEITH-HODGE/EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE SOCIETY; TINA LEAHY; COURTESY OF THE HOXTON EDINBURGH; ADOBE STOCK; DELTA AIRLINES; ALASKA AIRLINES**

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WORDS
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

UNITED AIRLINES DREAMS BIG

The US carrier reaches for the stars with its new Polaris Studio suites and upgraded features in every cabin

1D
Welcome aboard

WHEN UNITED AIRLINES' CEO Scott Kirby stood before analysts in January and declared United "the best airline in the history of aviation", the statement landed somewhere between bold vision and boardroom hyperbole. But now, five months later, United is rolling out the most comprehensive premium product upgrade in its history – one that may finally give weight to those lofty words.

The airline has unveiled United Elevated, a top-to-toe reimagining of its long-haul offering that touches everything from business class to back row. It starts with an ultra-luxe new seat called Polaris Studio and includes fine dining, 4K OLED screens, a redesign of every cabin, and free global satellite wifi powered by Starlink.

"This is the next chapter in that journey," said Kirby. "We're introducing what we believe will be some of the best aircraft in the world." At the heart of the revamp is United's bid to reclaim the premium traveller and reposition itself not just as big – but as the best.

Polaris Studio

At the front of new Boeing 787-9 aircraft, eight enclosed Polaris Studio suites promise United's most exclusive flying experience to date. Each is 25% larger than existing Polaris seats, with full privacy doors, 27-inch 4K OLED screens and even companion ottomans with seat belts for travellers flying together. "It's a clear leader in US business class," said Andrew Nocella, United's CCO.

Featuring wool-blend textiles, quartzite cocktail tables and walnut finishes, the suites offer subtle luxury without ostentation. Passengers can expect Saks Fifth Avenue bedding, Perricone MD amenity kits and United-branded playing cards. Wireless charging, Bluetooth audio and digital seat controls round out the tech specs.

And yes – there's caviar. Ossetra, to be exact, served as an amuse-bouche alongside Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé Champagne. A curated post-dessert snack box follows.

"Our goal isn't just to create the best product in the sky. It's to build an airline that feels different," Kirby said. "One that you can trust to be honest, transparent and reliable."

Polaris and Premium Plus

Meanwhile, the standard Polaris cabin isn't standing still. The new 56-seat layout brings full sliding doors to every seat, 19-inch 4K OLED screens, and a mix of inward- and aisle-facing seats for better sleep and privacy.

> The cabins will debut on new Boeing 787-9 on routes to Singapore and London

The signature sundae cart survives, now rotating seasonal flavours from US creamery Tillamook. Wine upgrades bring vintages from Heitz Cellar, Shafer Vineyards and Laurent-Perrier.

In Premium Plus, United debuts its largest cabin yet – with 35 seats featuring privacy partitions, tactile surfaces and 16-inch 4K OLED screens with wireless charging. "We want to offer everything from the most premium experiences to the most affordable ones," explained Nocella. "Because travellers evolve." (See our review of the current cabin on page 78).

In economy, the upgrades are tangible. Each seat now features a 13-inch 4K OLED screen – the largest economy display of any global airline – and six power outlets per row.

United is also investing more than $150 million into F&B. In Polaris, a new grab-and-go snack bar is stocked with upscale items from Garrett, Joe & Seph's and Community, while midflight tapas draw inspiration from regional cuisines.

"I said we'd be the biggest and best airline in the history of aviation – and we are the biggest," Kirby said. "As for being the best, we're well on our way, but we're still in the early innings." The stakes are high – but United is betting big, and visibly, on product.

CUVÉE ROSÉ
CHAMPAGNE
Laurent-Perrier

FROM TOP Polaris Studio seats will be situated at the front of the Polaris cabin; Champagne and caviar service

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THE 1804 INN & COTTAGES AT BARBOURSVILLE VINEYARDS

Barboursville, VA

Located on the grounds of the award-winning Barboursville Vineyards, The 1804 Inn & Cottages is comprised of select historic houses on a unique wine estate, preserving the intangible space for reflection that cannot be attempted by conventional properties. A classic Georgian villa, The 1804 Inn predates, by a generation, the construction of Governor Barbour's mansion which it overlooks, and its three suites are expansive and luxurious in the most timeless way. The three cottages, within strolling proximity to the historic landmark Ruins, the Tasting Room, and Palladio Restaurant, evoke the estate's plantation history and offer exclusivity, comfort, and seclusion for the utmost in off-the-beaten-path luxury.

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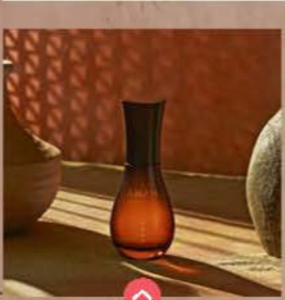


Aman Resorts
The ultra-luxury resort group has its own retail concept to let guests bring home some magic from their stay. The collection starts off more affordably with a £30 hand lotion, but prices steadily climb from there: think £360 bikinis, a £1,800 leather washbag, and a £3,460 cashmere blanket, complete with the subtle A monogram. This is understated style at a suitably extravagant price point.

Stay chic

Branded merch from luxury hotels is turning the humble souvenir into a fashion statement

FORGET THE STANDARD logo-stamped slippers, hotels are now teaming up with luxury brands to sell a coveted lifestyle and reach new audiences. While hotel products have always reinforced brand identity, they've now evolved into slick, stylish status symbols and a signifier of insider luxury.

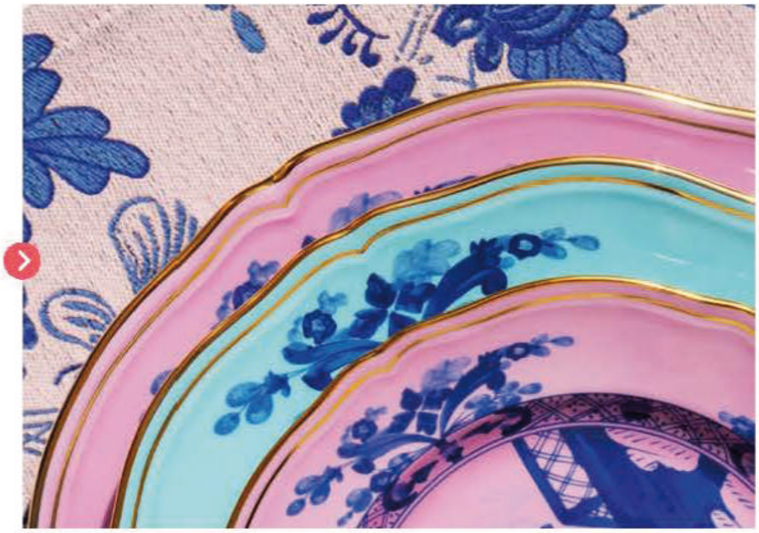
The pandemic accelerated this trend as hotels sought to diversify their income and find new ways of connecting with potential guests. Indeed, younger aspirational travellers can now feel like part of the club – even if they can't afford the membership quite yet. Wearing a baseball cap or tote bag from your favourite hotel brand doesn't just demonstrate loyalty (or show off your well-travelled lifestyle). These luxe products also brim with the emotion of a memorable trip, allowing fans to take a small, tangible piece of their plush experience back home – whether a sensory spray that powerfully reminds you of your suite, or a box of loose-leaf tea enjoyed at breakfast.

Hotel merchandise taps into the deeper psychology of why we love to travel. It sits right at the intersection of style and nostalgia, giving hotels the perfect opportunity to influence and inspire their guests long after they've checked out. Here, we showcase some of our favourite swag.

WORDS
DEBORAH CICUREL

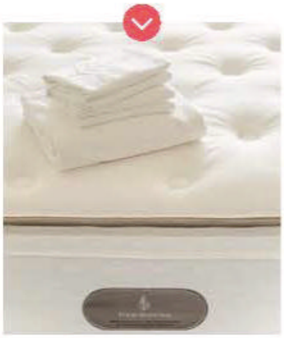
The Standard
Boutique hotel group Standard Hotels has properties in cities from London and Ibiza to Miami and Bangkok. The brand's achingly cool aesthetic can be shopped in person or online: bring home the pillowcases and sheets found in The Standard rooms, then go a step further by snapping up fun lifestyle products like canary yellow umbrellas, astrology decks and dachshund salt and pepper shakers. Bag extra cool points by shopping from its collabs with hip partners such as sustainable athleisure company Floétique or fashion and media brand Highsnobiety.

St Regis Hotels & Resorts
The upscale Marriott International brand gives you the chance to upgrade rooms back home with its branded goods. Aside from the bed itself, you can also purchase the brand's bespoke bedding set in partnership with Frette, alongside signature bathrobes, cotton sateen pyjamas and slippers. A whimsical set of porcelain tableware designed in collaboration with Ginori 1735 will also jazz up your dining room, while the brand's floral fragrance or room diffuser will dial up the atmosphere throughout your house.



> ‘If money is no object, you can buy a luxury speedboat built for Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc for a cool €615,000’

Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts
Synonymous with luxury, Four Seasons has become even more embedded in bucket list experiences thanks to its cameo in all three seasons of HBO's *The White Lotus*. Those keen to emulate the "stealth wealth" lifestyle of its onscreen characters are in luck, especially as night falls. Four Seasons At Home allows fans to buy the same sleeping experiences they enjoyed while in the hotel, for what it brands "a bed unlike any other". Available for purchase are mattresses, linens, towels, robes, candles, slippers, PJs and more – go the whole hog and get the "Signature Sleep Set" bundle to replicate those dreamy forty winks at home.



Oetker Collection
Some of the world's best hotels belong to the Oetker Collection, including Le Bristol Paris, The Lanesborough in London and Jumby Bay Island in Antigua, and the prestigious properties naturally have an opulent retail offering. Affordable options include a £45 keychain from Le Bristol Paris, or a £25 Jumby Bay marble coaster. On the other side of the scale, Eden Rock St Barths has collaborated with Hublot to create 25 limited-edition branded watches for £26,400. If money is no object, buy a luxury speedboat built for Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc for a cool €615,000.

IMAGES COURTESY OF AMAN ESSENTIALS/HOTELS AND RESORTS; FOUR SEASONS; THE STANDARD HOTELS; OETKER COLLECTION

Swipe, tap and earn

Smart ways to pick up the tab while travelling

0000 0000 0000 0000
RDHOLDER

YOUR COMPANY MIGHT be footing the bill when you're travelling for work, but the way you pay still matters. Choosing the right card or account can earn you thousands of reward points or air miles to redeem on your next adventure. Get it wrong and you risk losing out to poor exchange rates, hidden fees or missed perks.

If your spending is reimbursed, the foreign exchange rate won't matter so much to you. What will count is the personal rewards you can earn. Alongside points, look out for cards that offer lounge access and travel insurance too. The above affects the self-employed cohort too, but transaction fees and exchange rates need to be factored in as well.

Here we look at some of the best rewards credit cards, fee-free debit options and apps that give you more control on the go.

ONLINE BANKS OFFER OVERSEAS PERKS

TRADITIONAL CREDIT CARDS aren't your only option for overseas spending. Challenger banks such as Monzo (right), Starling and Chase are a good choice for fee-free spending and budgeting controls. Their apps offer real-time spending alerts and the ability to freeze and unfreeze cards instantly.

Starling offers fee-free overseas spending and ATM withdrawals – plus Starling Kite for existing customers with children.

Alternatively, pre-paid cards offered by Wise and Revolut are able to hold balances in multiple currencies at the same time. This is a great way to take advantage of foreign exchange dips and stock up on currency for future trips. Just make sure you understand the monthly fee limits and are aware of the quirks of each card.

For example, Revolut's standard plan doesn't charge exchange fees for most currencies on weekdays – but you may be charged at weekends (Friday 5pm-Sunday 6pm). You can access Revolut via ApplePay or Google Pay, or go old-school and pay to have a physical card delivered to your home.

WORDS
RUTH JACKSON-KIRBY

GET MORE FROM YOUR CREDIT CARD SPEND

THE AMERICAN EXPRESS Preferred Rewards Gold credit card lets you rack up Membership Rewards points which you can convert into Avios, Virgin Points and other airline and hotel reward points. Or you can use your points at the likes of John Lewis, Selfridges and Amazon.

You could earn 30,000 bonus points if you spend £3,000 in the first three months (sign-up offers vary), and double points for foreign spending. The card is fee-free in the first year but then it goes up to £195 a year.

If you're self-employed, you'll want a card that balances rewards with low costs. The Capital on Tap Visa card is a possible solution. It's only available to limited companies but offers no annual fees, no foreign exchange fees and you earn one Avios per £1 spent.

For sole traders looking to keep the cost of travel down, the fee-free Barclaycard Platinum is free to use for purchases and cash withdrawals abroad – plus it offers 0.25% cashback on your spending.

A more rewarding but expensive option for business owners is the American Express Business Platinum card. It has a steep £650 annual fee (which you may be able to expense), but the travel benefits are impressive. You get access to 1,400 airport lounges around the world, £200 travel credit with American Express Travel online, credit at select hotels, rental car discounts and £150 annual credit at Dell. On top of that you also rack up Membership Points on your spending.

If travel benefits is your main concern, then the British Airways American Express Premium Plus is also one to consider, with 30,000 Avios sign up bonus (when you spend £6,000 in the first three months), 3 x Avios earning on British Airways or BA Holidays spend, 1.5 x Avios on regular purchases, plus a free companion voucher when you spend £15,000 in the allotted time.

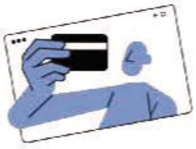
> 'The Amex Business Platinum card is expensive but rewarding'

SIMPLE SPENDING MISTAKES TO AVOID

However you choose to pay when travelling abroad, make sure you don't get caught out by these common, costly mistakes

Avoid withdrawing cash at ATMs – you'll usually pay a fee and, if you're using a credit card, most charge interest from the minute the cash is in your hand.

If you're offered the choice to pay in pounds sterling or the local currency, always stick with the latter. Paying in sterling typically means a poor exchange rate.



If you opt for an American Express card for the perks, carry a back-up such as Revolut or Starling as Amex isn't universally accepted.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK; MONZO

family-friendly travel

How to keep kids entertained (and stress levels to a minimum) at the airport

TRAVELLING FOR BUSINESS is one thing, but when it comes to bringing the family along with you, needs and priorities often change. Thankfully, there are ways to make the airport environment more child-friendly and hassle-free as we navigate the school holidays.

Lounge access

Finding a moment of peace at the airport can feel like an oasis in the desert. Airport lounges offer a welcome escape for families seeking a bit of calm amidst the chaos.

With food, quiet zones, and even dedicated kids' play areas, lounges can be a lifesaver for stressed-out parents. Many lounges also offer complimentary access for children, making them even more family-friendly. During peak times however, ensuring there is space for the whole family can sometimes be a challenge.

Priority Pass members can bypass this stress and enjoy added peace of mind by pre-booking their spot in select lounges. For a small fee, you can easily reserve your place via the website or app, giving you more control over your airport experience and removing some of the uncertainty out of travel.

> Priority Pass members can bypass stress by pre-booking select lounges via the app

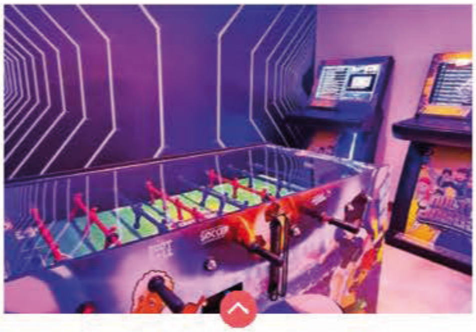
Smooth transfers

Meet and Assist services can also make life easier for families, ensuring your arrival, departure, connection or transfer is fast and easy. Avoid the crowds, expedite the lines, and navigate through airports with helpful agents. Taking things one step further, why not book a private airport transfer to ensure seamless door-to-door travel? Priority Pass members can access this service at more than 1,100 airports worldwide within the app.

Once at your destination, consider hiring a car. Hopping on public transport is one thing when you're zipping about with a backpack – but with buggies and family travel essentials, you might want your own wheels. Priority Pass members get access to over 55,000 car rental locations and preferential rates through the app.

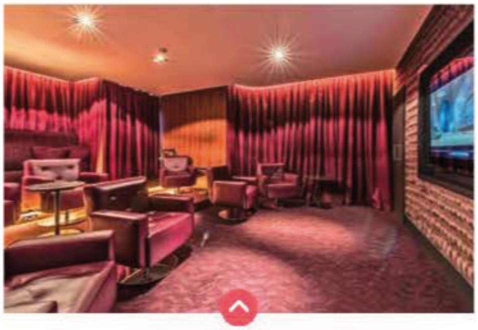
CHILD-APPROVED

Family-friendly lounges across the Priority Pass network



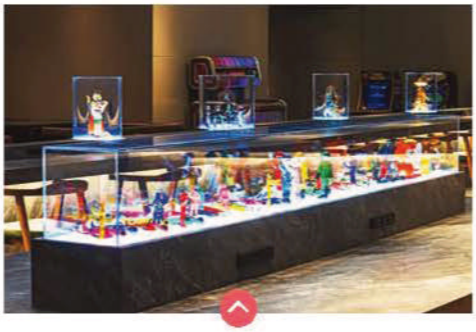
THE LOUNGE VIRACOPOS, TERMINAL 1, CAMPINAS VIRACOPOS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BRAZIL

Why visit: Children under 12 gain free access to this lounge in Campinas, São Paulo. Once inside, you'll find a children's play area, a quiet area, plus a games room for older kids.



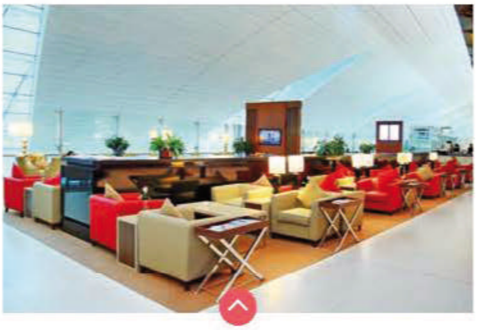
NO1 LOUNGE HEATHROW, TERMINAL 3, LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT, UK

Why visit: In addition to family areas, a cinema room will keep little ones entertained. Tots under two also get free entry. Priority Pass members can pre-book this lounge via the app or website.



I.A.S.S SUPERIOR LOUNGE - KOCOO, TERMINAL 2, TOKYO NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, JAPAN

Why visit: Entertain children with a selection of old-school games such as Mario Brothers. The lounge also has a retro toy museum and gallery of anime drawings. Children under six can enter for free.



MARHABA LOUNGE, TERMINAL 1, CONCOURSE D, DUBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, UAE

Why visit: Kids won't even notice the wait for your flight thanks to a children's play area and TV room to keep them occupied. Children under two are also able to enter for free.

MULTIGENERATIONAL TRAVEL

71% of luxury travellers plan to take at least one multi-generational trip in the next 12 months. Why?

63%	43%	22%	15%
Creating shared family memories	Annual family tradition	Teaching younger generations about heritage	Educational experiences

Source: The 2025 Luxury Travel Report by Preferred Hotels & Resorts

FAMILY AND BLEISURE

CHILD-FRIENDLY ATTRACTIONS IN KEY BUSINESS DESTINATIONS

New York

EAT: Koneko Cat Cafe – play with furry feline friends while enjoying cake.

SEE: Bronx Zoo – one of the largest zoos in the world.

VISIT: Legoland – 90 minutes from downtown, with rides, shows and themed lands.

London

EAT: Inamo Covent Garden – expect interactive tabletops, a games room and even karaoke.

SEE: Natural History Museum – start with a life-size skeleton of a blue whale.

VISIT: Warner Bros. Studio Tour – spellbinding adventures for the whole family.

Hong Kong (SAR)

EAT: Yum Cha – the child-friendly dim sum includes BBQ piggy buns and cartoon-style baos.

SEE: The Peak – ride the Peak Tram up the mountain for amazing views

VISIT: Ocean Park – the mountain-side theme park with two resident pandas.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK

SHIFTING ATTITUDES

How have opinions about sustainable travel changed over the past decade?

BOOKING.COM HAS RELEASED its 10th annual Sustainability Report, revealing a major shift in global awareness about sustainable travel since the platform launched its first report in 2016. Over the past decade, Booking.com has surveyed nearly 230,000 travellers in 35 markets, with this year's report alone canvassing 32,000 travellers in 34 markets.

Destination diligence

In positive news, **93%** of global travellers want to travel more sustainably in 2025 – a huge upswing from the **42%** statistic in 2016. When it comes to choosing a destination, travellers want to minimise the impact on the location they visit. As a result, **39%** seek advice on travelling at other times of the year, avoiding peak periods, while **36%** head to alternative destinations to avoid overcrowding.

Stay eco

During the trip itself, travellers are increasingly committed to supporting the economies of the locations they visit – **73%** want the money spent to reach the local community, and **69%** want to leave places better than when they arrived. This extends to their energy use, too. In 2020, **43%** of travellers turned off the air con and heating in their accommodation when they were out and about – a figure that increased to **67%** by 2023.

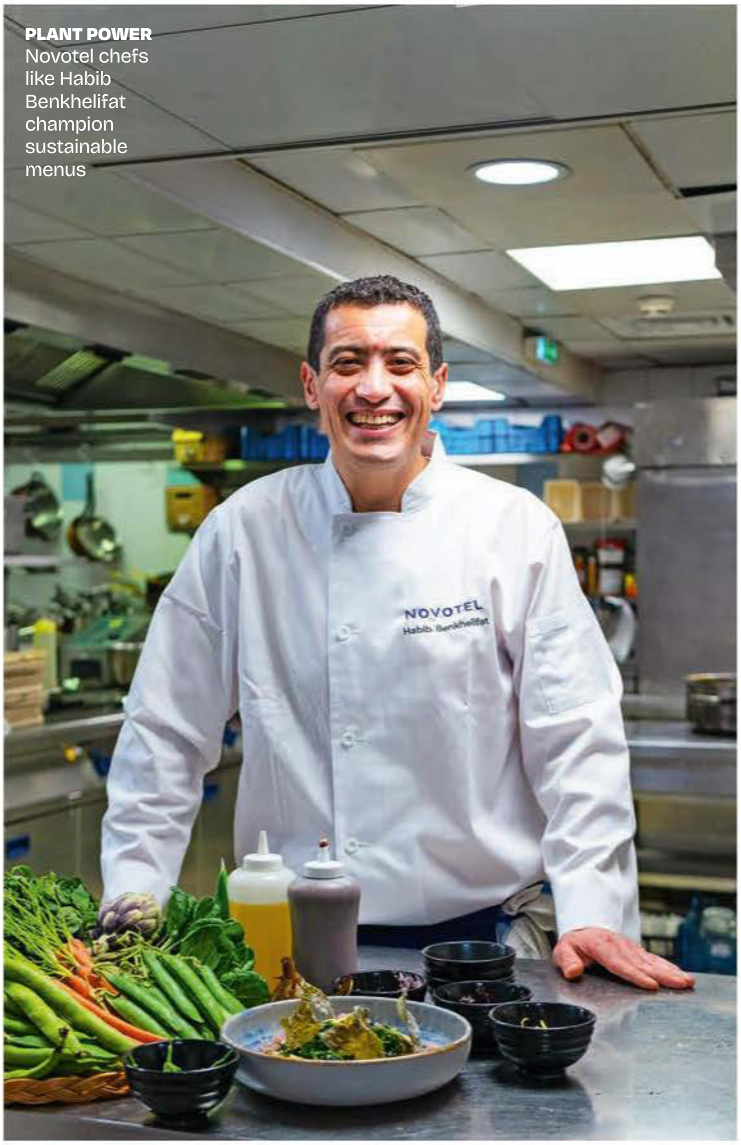
Think local

For those living in tourist-heavy areas, more than half of respondents (**53%**) say that tourists often or always respect local customs and traditions, and support local businesses (**54%**).

Under half (**48%**) of respondents believe there is an appropriate amount of tourism in their home location, but highlight the most common tourism-related downsides as traffic congestion (**38%**), littering (**35%**), overcrowding (**30%**) and rising cost of living (**29%**).

That said, only **16%** consider a visitor cap as the solution. Instead, they emphasise the need for investment in infrastructure upgrades, with the main demands including improved transport (**38%**), waste management (**37%**) and environmental conservation (**32%**).

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER



PLANT POWER Novotel chefs like Habib Benkhelifat champion sustainable menus

Making waves

NOVOTEL HAS MARKED the first anniversary of its ocean-focused partnership with WWF. A new report highlights progress at its 600 hotels worldwide.

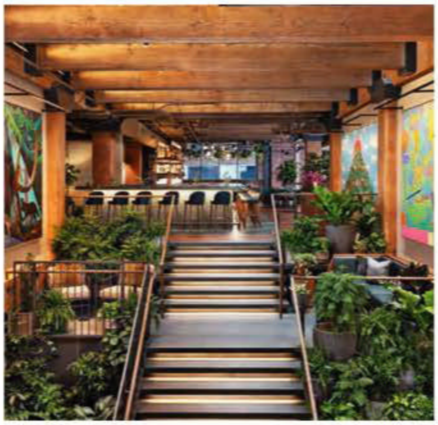
The brand's plant-forward strategy, which aims for 25% of menus to be plant-based by 2026, is already in full swing. Today, 39% of hotels dedicate at least a quarter of their menus to vegetarian or vegan options. Meanwhile, its Sustainable Seafood Charter will see 350 endangered seafood species removed from menus by 2027.

"The more we understand, the more we are inspired to act," said Jean-Yves Minet, Novotel Global Brand President. "We don't have all the answers, but we want our teams to learn from the experts so they understand enough to ask the right questions, to engage their hearts and minds and drive both business impact and community engagement."

Outside the hotel, Novotel has funded several WWF ocean-based projects – including tracking 12,600 marine turtles in the Pacific via the Blue Corridors initiative, and installing 73 low-impact buoys in the Mediterranean to protect Posidonia seagrass meadows – carbon sinks which store more carbon per hectare than the Amazon rainforest.

Back home, members of Accor's loyalty programme ALL can donate points to WWF France's Blue Panda initiative, which champions marine research and ocean protection.

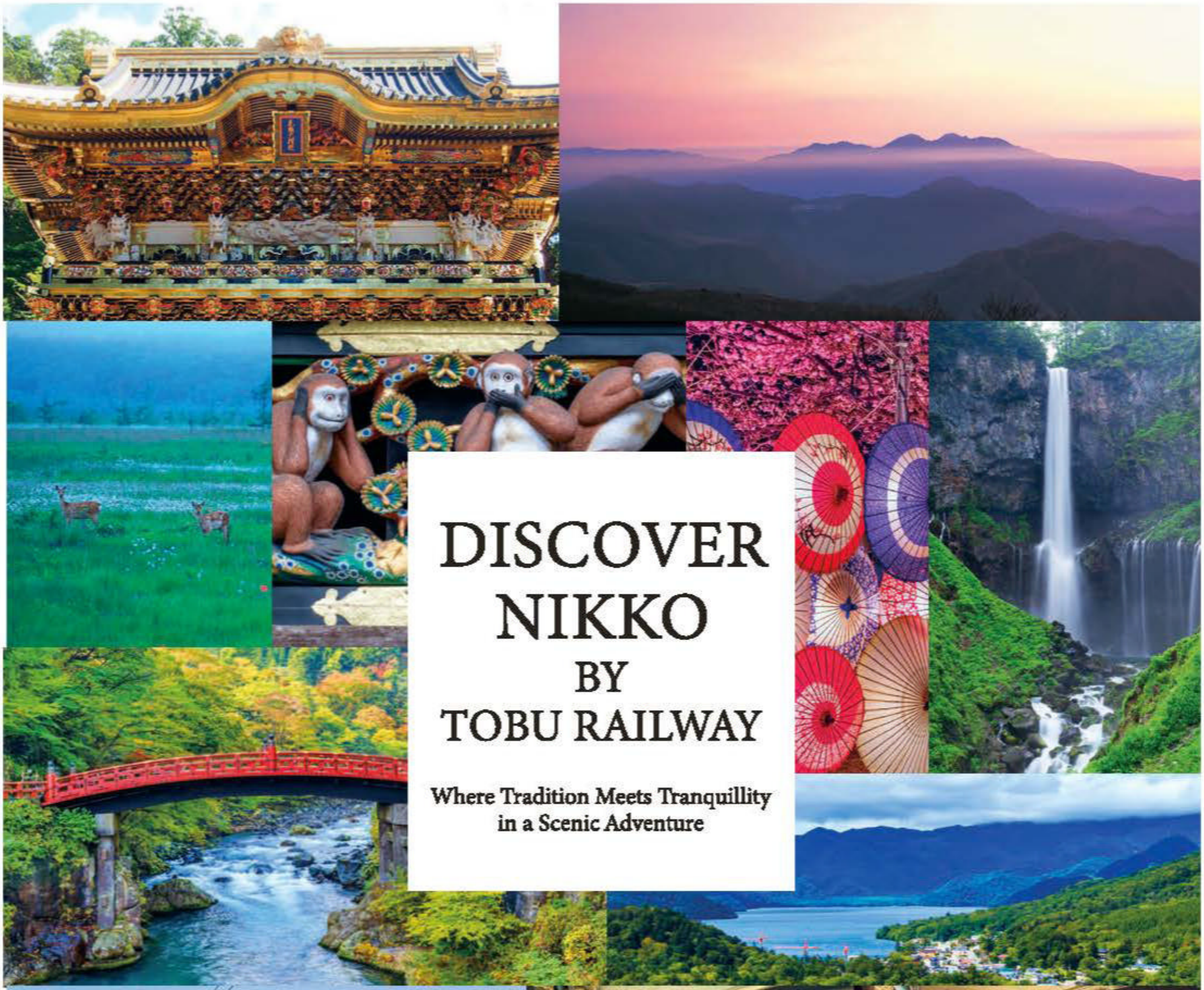
POSITIVE STAYS



CARBON POSITIVE GROUP Populus Hotels has opened its second hotel, following last year's launch of Populus Denver. Seattle's historic Pioneer Square sets the scene for the new site, with the 1907-built Westland Building transformed into a sustainable hotel – reducing the embodied carbon footprint by 36% (or 492 tons of coal burned). Created by Urban Villages and managed by Aparium Hotel Group, the 120-room Populus Seattle features Pacific Northwest rainforest-inspired design, leafy interiors with native plants, and more than 300 nature-inspired artworks created on-site, plus preserved architectural details such as exposed brick. Further facilities include hearth-driven restaurant Salt Harvest with a glass-enclosed patio, Pioneer Square's first rooftop bar Firn, a café and two meetings and events spaces. The hotel will sequester more carbon in biomass and soil than it emits through embodied and operational activities over its full life cycle, while a tree will be planted for every night's stay. The hotel also uses 100% renewable electricity and technology to divert all food waste into compost.

TOP TIP
Book the Summit Suite on the top floor, complete with a dining area, kitchenette, soaking tub and private terrace overlooking the city.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; ARTXIV; RIC STOVALL; ©ANTONIO BUSIELLO/WWF



DISCOVER NIKKO BY TOBU RAILWAY

Where Tradition Meets Tranquillity in a Scenic Adventure

SPACIA X

Tobu Railway's flagship express train, running between Asakusa in central Tokyo and Nikko/Kinugawa Onsen, has been given an upgrade in July 2023. This sleek and stylish train is designed to embody the future of eco-conscious rail travel.

NIKKO PASS

The NIKKO PASS is the ideal way to travel to and around Nikko, one of Japan's most popular leisure destinations. Nikko boasts spectacular nature, soothing hot springs, and World Heritage architecture, as well as a wealth of outdoor activities. You can now purchase digital passes on Klook.

BOOK NIKKO PASS

BOOK LIMITED EXPRESS TRAIN TICKET

1 HOUR 50 MINUTES

TOKYO — **NIKKO**

SPACIA X will take you to Nikko in under 2 hours.

Nikko
Tokyo

TOBU Group

For more information about SPACIA X:
https://www.tobu.co.jp/en/sightseeing/

Explore.

Eat, drink, shop, relax

WORDS
JEREMY TAYLOR

EXTRA DAY

Tokyo

A global hub for technology, cutting-edge luxury retailers and start-ups, Tokyo is one of Asia's most lively commercial centres – and home to an estimated 14 million people. Travellers will enjoy dipping into the Japanese capital's unique cultural history and passion for the new. From the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Tower (pictured) to the neon streets of the dazzling Ginza shopping district and the skyscraper-clad Shinjuku, this bustling metropolis is irresistible. An extra 24 hours will barely whet the appetite for what Tokyo has to offer, but expect a kaleidoscope of special experiences that live long in the memory.

IMAGES FRANCESCO RICCARDO IACOMINO/GETTY IMAGES

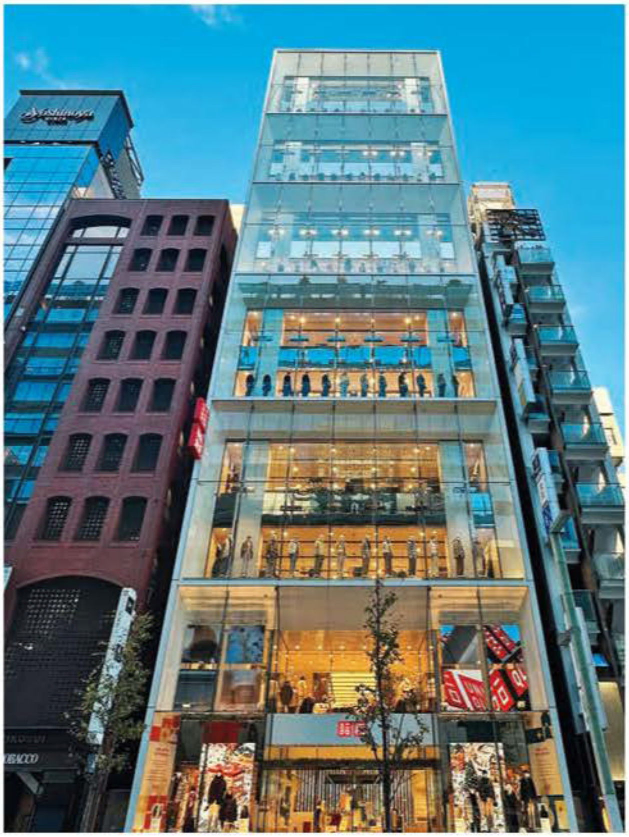
→ *Continued from previous page*

The New Otani
Almost a city within a city, this hotel in Chiyoda City celebrated its 60th anniversary last year. Despite its age, The New Otani offers every facility a modern traveller might desire, including a dentist and florist. A giant atrium illuminates a breathtaking public area, but the most unexpected feature is four hectares of gardens. The grounds date back 400 years, with carp ponds and a backlit waterfall – bringing a welcome slice of tranquillity to the urban metropolis.

Ginza
Tokyo's celebrated district is a neon-lit extravaganza of high-end boutiques and more traditional stores. Japanese craftsmanship can be found in niche shops such as the pearl specialist Mikimoto or kimono store Chikusen. Kyukyodo, meanwhile, offers beautiful stationery and incense (perfect for gifts to bring home to envious friends). Importantly, all have long and illustrious histories that celebrate the artisan.

Chavaty
Paris is not the city with the most Michelin restaurants – that honour belongs to Tokyo, which also has more than double the number found in New York. Known for its amazing culinary scene, the city offers everything from classic sushi to the finest French fare. However, for something special, try Japanese flavours not found anywhere else. Chavaty, located in the trendy neighbourhood of Omotesando, serves *hojicha* (roasted green tea) ice cream – the ultimate lick bait.

Rickshaw ride
This was the most common form of transport in Tokyo until the motorcar took over. Some locals say a man-pulled cart is now faster than a car, thanks to the city's notorious traffic jams. A guided rickshaw ride through Asakusa is a must.



FROM TOP
The 12-floor Uniqlo store in Ginza; rickshaw ride; Amaou mint ice cream at Chavaty

3 TOKYO BUSINESSES

Honda

The car and motorcycle manufacturer was founded in 1948, as Japan's industry rebuilt rapidly post-war. Honda now has factories around the world, including 12 in the US alone.

Japan Airlines

Founded in 1951, JAL was Japan's first international airline, crucial in post-WWII global connectivity and representing Japan during its economic resurgence.

Hitachi

This is another giant multinational, with operations in electronic and transportation markets, to name just a few. Established in 1910, Hitachi ranks 196th in the *Fortune* Global 500.

IMAGES TOP: JOHN CAMERON/UNSPLASH; CENTRE: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF CHAVATY

Cheers to that

Peek into the pantry to discover two undisputed legends in European cuisine

WHEN IT COMES TO EUROPEAN classics, where better to start than in the kitchen? Grana Padano PDO cheese and Prosecco DOC are two of Italy's most prized culinary exports – and one of its most iconic pairings. Not only are they loved for their rich flavours and heritage, but also for the stringent quality certifications that protect their integrity – and their homelands.

A DELICIOUS LEGACY

Grana Padano PDO, a hard, slow-ripened cheese made from partially skimmed raw cow's milk, is the most consumed PDO cheese in the world. Protected by the Denominazione di Origine Protetta (Protected Designation of Origin – PDO), each wheel must meet rigorous standards, like being aged for a minimum of nine months up to more than 24 months. Its delicate yet complex flavour is a direct expression of its northern Italian origins, from the lush Po Valley to the alpine edges of Lombardy.

EUROPE'S FINEST PRODUCE

Just as tempting is Prosecco DOC, the sparkling wine that's become synonymous with Italian aperitivo culture. Produced solely in the North-East of Italy, in the regions of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia, it owes its crisp, floral notes to the Glera grape. The Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) seal on the neck of each bottle ensures quality and guarantees absolute authenticity.

To promote these products, the European Union co-funded the Cheers and Cheese to EU initiative. This project was designed to boost conscious consumption by highlighting tradition, sustainability, and traceability behind each bite of Grana Padano PDO and every sip of Prosecco DOC. Through events, tastings and culinary storytelling, it invites consumers to experience a deeper connection with European food culture.

Discover the best of quality
cheersandcheese.eu

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Iconic Grana Padano PDO cheese and Prosecco DOC Rosé; make your own asparagus and nectarine salad paired with a refreshing glass of Prosecco DOC Rosé

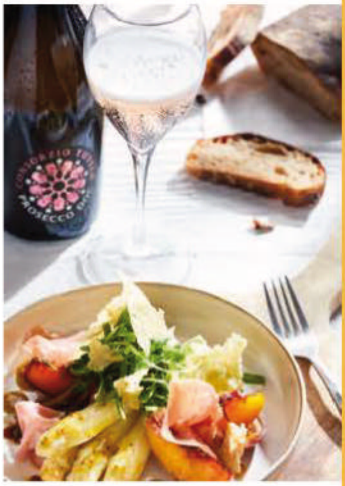
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them

CHEERS and CHEESE TO EU

Bring it home

Try out this delicious asparagus and nectarine salad with Grana Padano PDO crisps, best served with a refreshing glass of Prosecco DOC Rosé

1. Cook white asparagus briefly and let cool
2. Caramelise sugar in a pan, then sauté sliced nectarines and red onion with butter and rosemary
3. Grate some Grana Padano PDO cheese and bake into crisps
4. Whisk mustard, honey, vinegar, and oil for the salad dressing
5. Arrange rocket, asparagus, and fruit on a platter, drizzle with the dressing and top with Serrano ham and your Grana Padano crisps
6. Enjoy with a cool glass of Prosecco DOC Rosé



ENJOY IT'S FROM EUROPE

GRANA PADANO PROSECCO DOC ITALIAN GENIO Co-funded by the European Union

TOP IMAGE FACEBOOK: @FLORALUNA.PH; INSTAGRAM: @EVENTS.FLORALUNA; FLORALUNA.NET

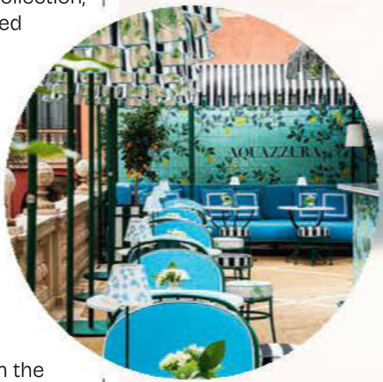
THE TREND

FASHION-FORWARD FLAVOURS

Designer brands are putting their stylish stamp on the global dining scene

LUXURY FASHION BRANDS are launching bars and restaurants around the world inspired by their stylish designs. At Harrods in London, for instance, you can enjoy Breakfast at Tiffany's for real at the Tiffany Blue Box Cafe. Expect croissants in the shape of the jeweller's iconic box, Fifth Avenue salmon and cream cheese bagels, New York pancake stacks, plus blue and white chinaware.

In Rome, meanwhile, Hotel de Russie, a Rocco Forte Hotel, has debuted an alfresco bar with Aquazzura just in time for summer. Inspired by the Italian brand's Casa Secret Garden tableware collection, the botanical-inspired bar in the hotel courtyard (pictured right) features lemon trees in striped planters and tapas on Aquazzura Casa porcelain.



Several brands have a whole family of restaurants in fashionable cities. In the restaurant business since 1998, Giorgio Armani now offers over 20 sites across four continents. Menus reflect the region while still honouring his Italian roots and integrating the Armani/Casa homeware into the mix. Ralph Lauren, meanwhile, has restaurants in New York, Paris, Chicago, Chengdu and Milan, serving American favourites (think lobster rolls and ice cream sundaes).

Gucci has teamed up with celebrated chef Massimo Bottura for its contemporary Italian eateries in Florence, LA, Tokyo and Seoul – each with a regional spin. In Beverly Hills, playfully titled dishes include Fly Me Away, while the Florence outpost boasts a Michelin star – fitting for the birthplace of the House of Gucci.

THIS IS A TIFF
The Tiffany Blue Box Cafe at Harrods

ONE FINE MORNING Tiffany Blue Box Cafe at Harrods serves breakfast and Champagne afternoon tea

IMAGES WWW.AQUILAMATTIA.IT, MATTIA AQUILA; COURTESY OF HARRODS; THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OF BHUTAN

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

THE PRODUCT

PRESERVE THAT POUR

EVER FANCIED CALMING your nerves with a glass of wine the night before a jam-packed business trip, only to be hampered by the prospect of wasting a bottle's leftovers? This sleek new decanter offers a smart solution to your (tipsy) troubles. The ETO 750 promises to preserve the flavour of an entire bottle for up to two weeks – its airtight seal keeping wine safe from oxygen, light and heat. The elegant and easy-to-assemble product fits inside the fridge door and also has a drip-free pouring mechanism, making your sips that bit more sophisticated.

Don't just take our word for it – the brand received the King's Award for Enterprise in Innovation in 2025, which celebrates outstanding achievements by UK businesses. The trusty accessory is available in seven finishes (from copper to gold and brass), with prices starting from £139 – and, best of all, it has a lifetime warranty.

THE EXPERIENCE

A taste of mystical mushrooms

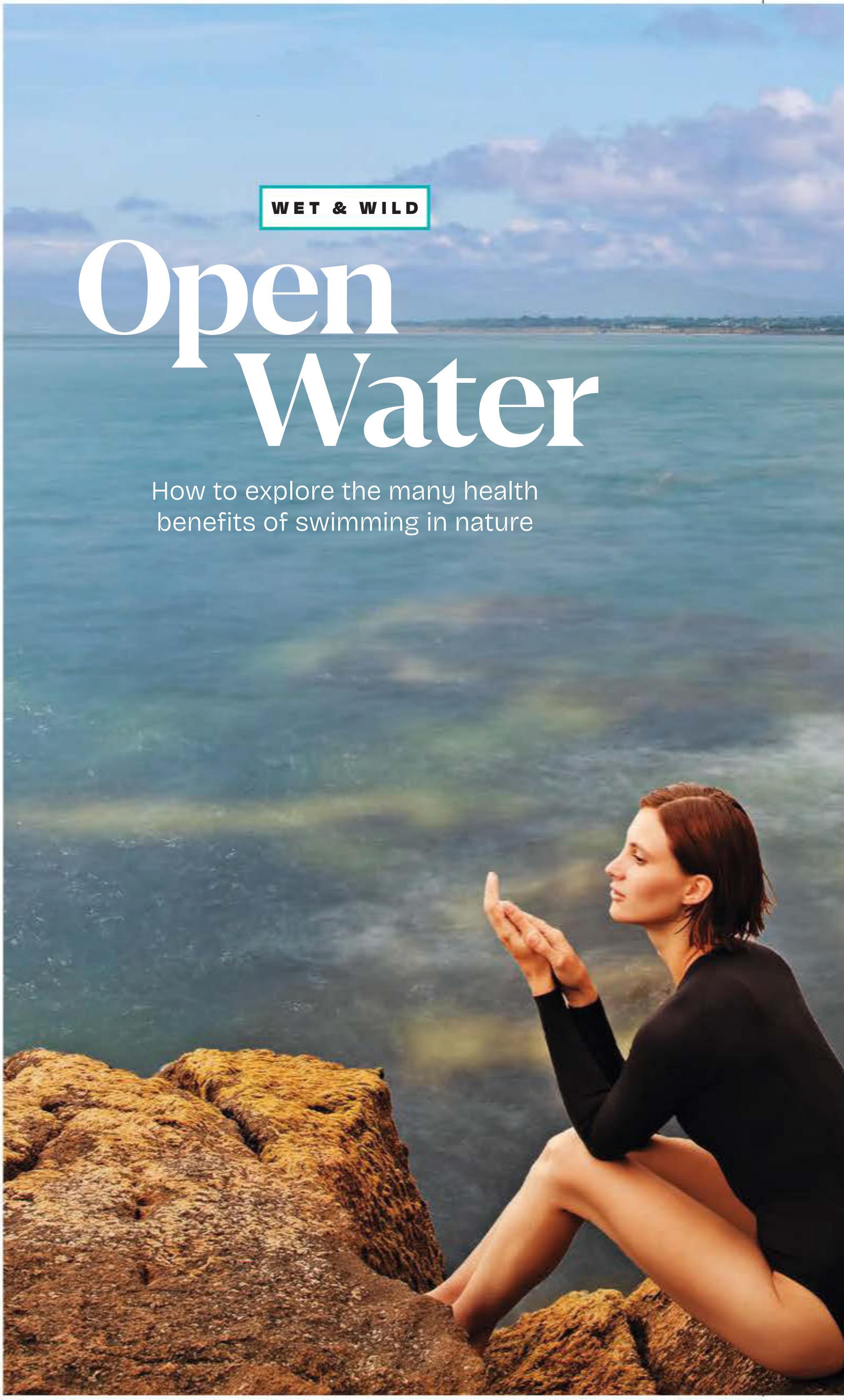
BHUTAN IS CELEBRATING the powerful fungi grown across its awe-inspiring Himalayan lands this summer. The Department of Tourism has launched a new Mushroom & Culture Foraging Tour, which takes place from 13-23 August. Developed in partnership with Bhutanese tour operator Gomo Adventures, the tour gives visitors the chance to learn foraging techniques from local villagers, identify mushrooms with expert mycologists (from the well-known chanterelle and shiitake to the medicinal caterpillar fungus), which they can subsequently cook up and eat alfresco, and attend photography and conservation workshops at the National Mushroom Centre. Come nightfall, travellers can join UV-guided night walks to discover glow-in-the-dark fungi. The new initiative is more than just a fun series of activities, it has been designed to advance fungal conservation and raise awareness about the organism's crucial role in sustaining biodiversity, soil health and forest regeneration. Prices start from US$5,500 per person and include a visa, Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee, a range of activities, transfers, equipment, meals and accommodation in hotels and homestays.

DID YOU KNOW
Bhutan is home to over 400 mushroom species.

WET & WILD

Open Water

How to explore the many health benefits of swimming in nature



WHEN STRESS FEELS all-consuming, it could be time for a swim – or better yet, a *wild* swim. Wild swimming, the act of submerging into an open body of water, attracts wellness seekers with its benefits. It blends the soothing effects of time outside with cardiovascular exercise to minimise stress, fatigue and anger while improving your mood and enhancing overall wellbeing.

"Any body of water outdoors is going to be scenic. It's going to make you feel immersed in nature," says Emma MacDonald, founder of Wild Hebridean Swimming. "The experience is different from being in a hot swimming pool."

MacDonald, who runs open-water swim retreats on the Scottish isles of Mull and Iona, says interest in the activity soared during the pandemic. "People have done wild swimming for millennia," she says. "It's had a resurgence primarily since the pandemic because people couldn't get into swimming pools."

Cold-water swims can have an especially positive effect on one's health. Participants often report reduced anxiety, pain relief, minimised depression and increased alertness. "With the water being cold, there's a physiological response," MacDonald says. "You're getting this feeling of a thrill, a sense of adventure, and a cortisol spike because there's a fight-or-flight response."

Swimming in an open body of water is exhilarating, but it does have inherent risks, including strong currents and hypothermia. That's why MacDonald recommends wild swimming in a group, whether it's through a retreat or an organisation such as The Outdoor Swimming Society in the UK or local open-water swim clubs across the US. Additionally, wild dippers should always put their safety and wellbeing first, particularly when the water's chilly.

"I always say, stay in three minutes because that's how long it takes your body to acclimatise," MacDonald says, noting that anywhere between three and 15 minutes can help you reap the benefits of cold water immersions. Don't push yourself, even if your group decides to stay in longer. "Listen to your body and swim your own swim."

Travel is one of the best ways to get your feet wet with wild swimming. A rejuvenating dip could help you shirk jet lag, too. Here are five hotels that offer wild swimming experiences around the world, from the Alps to the Aegean Sea.

Few places have gone all in on wild swimming like the UK, and in addition to MacDonald's retreats on the isles of

WORDS
STEPHANIE VERMILLION

IMAGES **RICHARD WAITE; COURTESY OF THE BAHAMAS MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND AVIATION**

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Wild swimming at The Marker Dublin Hotel; blue hole at Caerula Mar Club, South Andros, Bahamas; Schloss Elmau, Germany

> ‘It’s going to make you feel immersed in nature’

Mull and Iona, travellers can dive in at Anantara’s **The Marker Dublin Hotel**. The accommodation runs several open-water experiences in the Irish Sea. At Vico Bathing Place, set beneath the craggy Hawk Cliff, cold-dippers may be joined by seals or even distant dolphins. Another favourite, the Forty Foot bathing pool in Sandycove, offers a healing dip with a historic backdrop – this water body even served as the opening scene in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

While the chilly Irish shoreline may invigorate your senses, tropical plunges have their own appeal, too. Take the Bahamas’ South Andros Island, where the paradisiacal **Caerula Mar Club** offers a “blue wonders” swimming experience that leads participants to four of the region’s more than 200 eye-popping blue holes – a phenomenon formed by an underwater cave system. The two-hour tour features folklore of the island as well as a wild float in the cerulean waters. Blue-hole snorkel options are available, too.

Meanwhile In California, **Dawn Ranch**, a getaway located 20 miles west of Santa Rosa, offers wild swimming in the Russian River. Its dock provides private river access for tubing, paddling or scenic dipping. Wild swimming pairs perfectly with the ranch’s myriad other wellness treatments, from sound bowl sessions to redwood soaking tubs.

Back in Europe, **Schloss Elmau**, an idyllic nature escape in the German Alps, offers expert-led and unguided wild swimming excursions in several peak-flanked lakes. Guests can take e-bikes to Ferchensee Lake, or they can join workshops with Olympic medalist Christian Tröger to go deeper with their open-water swim practice. Wild swimming trips are offered almost daily, along with a host of other on-site wellness experiences, including a hammam and herbal and infrared saunas.

The **Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel** in Athens, meanwhile, makes the most of its Aegean perch. The swimmable sea and private beach lie within steps of the guest rooms. Travellers can enter the water as they like or join one of the recreation team’s expert swimming coaches for a guided outing. Don’t miss the other water-based wellness immersions, such as hydrotherapy with an aroma steam grotto, chill showers and saunas in the spa’s Fountain House. **BT**

THE STAY

GREEK CHIC

Peek inside the latest Myconian getaway

IT'S HARD TO stand out on an island as picturesque as Mykonos. The architecture adheres to the humble yet striking Cycladic style of gleaming white stone – and every other building seems to be a boutique hotel. But the newest opening in the family-run Myconian Collection Resorts offers a cut above the rest.

Perched on a hilltop, Deos is a sleek, whitewashed sanctuary that offers sensational views over the ocean and pretty Mykonos Town, just a ten-minute walk down the hill. (Don't worry, complimentary buggies are on hand to ferry guests back up.)

It's the second most premium property in the Myconian Collection, surpassed only by the breathtaking Panoptis Escape on a higher cliff near Elia beach.

Expansive rooms are dressed in calming neutrals with spacious bathrooms, while balcony doors open onto a dreamy terrace complete with day beds to appreciate the Aegean views, and a private pool or Jacuzzi bubbling from dawn to dusk.

At poolside restaurant Epico, you'll find elevated classics from gyros and Greek salad to feta-stuffed calamari that was so good I ordered it twice.

A serene spa sanctuary, meanwhile, offers treatments using leading skincare brands such as Elemis. The popular 60-minute collagen therapy offered the perfect antidote to the island's famously bracing winds.

Rates start from €460 for a double room on a B&B basis.

deosmykonos.gr

SEA-STAY

Wonders by water

SAUDI ARABIA'S RAPIDLY developing tourism has expanded to the water. The kingdom's first Arabian cruise line, AROYA Cruises, debuted in December 2024 with itineraries in the Red Sea. Voyages depart from the historic city of Jeddah and take in destinations such as Egypt's Sharm El Sheikh and Aqaba on Jordan's southern coast – offering a gateway to the ancient city of Petra, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The itinerary culminates with an exclusive experience at Saba Beach on Jabal AlSabaya, a newly developed private island, which is solely accessible to cruise guests.

Onboard the ship itself, you'll find 12 restaurants (including the first Saudi

WORDS
TAMSIN COCKS, HANNAH BRANDLER

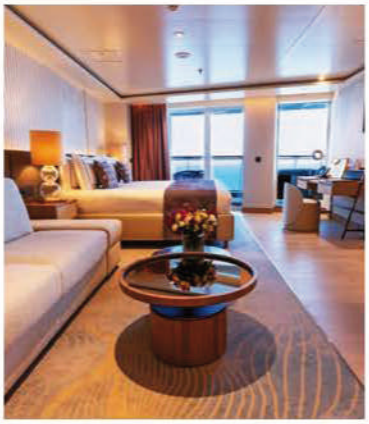
DID YOU KNOW?

Myconian Collection Resorts spans 14 five-star properties on the island (with another opening this summer). All are affiliated with leading hospitality collections.

BLISSFUL STAYS Relax with your own private pool or hot tub overlooking Mykonos Town

restaurant at sea), plus 20 entertainment venues and a souq-inspired retail area. The cruise also doubles as an art gallery, showcasing some 2,600 commissioned artworks from both Saudi and international artists. For those after a real VIP treatment, opt for suites in the ship's Khuzama area, which boast panoramic views, butler service, private dining services, seat reservations at selected entertainment and venues, access to a VIP lounge and bar, and priority boarding and disembarking.

Closer to home, AROYA Cruises also launched its first Eastern Mediterranean itinerary in June 2025, taking in cities across Turkey, Greece and Egypt.



IMAGES **AROYA CRUISES**

THE PRODUCT

Embrace the Mediterranean with Acqua di Parma's latest candle collection. The Italian brand's limited-edition La Terrazza Italiana Mirto di Panarea Chapeau! is a two-in-one masterpiece, concealing a 330g one-wick candle in the blue stoneware cap, while the porcelain body doubles as a 1,600g five-wick candle – complete with artist Ben Arpea's charming white and blue alfresco dining design.

Nujuma, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Where Uncharted Meets Extraordinary

Encircled by crystal-clear waters and soft white sands, Nujuma, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve is a sanctuary of unforgettable experiences. Accessed by chartered boat or seaplane, Nujuma features 65 overwater and beach villas, offering one-to-three-bedroom accommodation, spacious living areas and private pools overlooking the sea. Each villa enjoys a personal host, who will guide guests through all the enriching experiences this destination has to offer.

Red Sea, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
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Nujuma
A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE

The St. Regis Red Sea Resort

A Private Haven off the Shores of Saudi Arabia

Set within one of the planet's most pristine natural enclaves, this secluded haven harmonises avant-garde design with bespoke service. A collection of 90 exquisite overwater and beachfront villas, each graced with a private pool, offers an intimate luxury retreat. Here, the day begins with the soft glow of sunrise over coral-rich waters and ends with sabrage at dusk.

Red Sea, Saudi Arabia
+966 1 450 40000
stregisredsearesort.com
Reservations.redsea@stregis.com

ST REGIS
RED SEA

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

WATCH

The Thursday Murder Club

This Netflix adaptation of Richard Osman's bestselling murder mystery novel follows four friends in a retirement village who bond over their shared passion for solving murders. It's all fun and games until they uncover a death on their doorstep – expect a thrilling whodunnit with stars including Helen Mirren and Ben Kingsley.

READ

The Dark Pattern by Guido Palazzo and Ulrich Hoffrage

PALAZZO AND HOFFRAGE'S debut book, published on 26 June, takes an inside look at how fraud and scandal arise within major institutions. The duo draw on several case studies, including Volkswagen's 'diesel dupe', to explain how systemic issues within an organisation can cause morals to fall by the wayside. It's not all bad news: the pair offer leaders nine strategies to avoid making the same mistakes.

THE DARK PATTERN
THE HIDDEN DYNAMICS OF CORPORATE SCANDALS
GUIDO PALAZZO and ULRICH HOFFRAGE

LISTEN

THE DAILY MASTERY PODCAST
BY ROBIN SHARMA

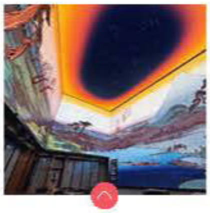
The Daily Mastery Podcast by Robin Sharma

LEARN TIPS FOR success in this podcast by Robin Sharma, the leadership expert and author of *The 5am Club* and *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series. The snappy, five-minute episodes promise the same advice he has previously given to artists, world-leading CEOs and NBA stars – from productivity tactics to mental resilience techniques and the best daily routine for optimal performance.

CULTURAL CALENDAR

OUR PICK OF EVENTS TAKING PLACE AROUND THE WORLD

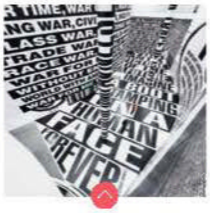
DOMESTIC



Hiroshige at Outernet
London, until 7 September

The British Museum has teamed up with West End exhibition space Outernet London to bring Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige's *Famous Places in Japan* series to life – its wraparound screens animating the landscape paintings. The immersive experience is running alongside the *Hiroshige: artist of the open road* exhibition at the British Museum.

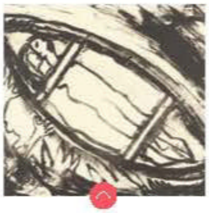
SHORT-HAUL



Barbara Kruger: Another Day. Another Night
Bilbao, until 11 September

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has pulled together over four decades of work by renowned American artist Barbara Kruger. Expect her striking paste-ups (black and white collages of images and text), recent large-scale digital artwork and *Untitled (Path)*, a piece inspired by Bilbao's bilingual status and made exclusively for the exhibition.

LONG-HAUL



Ferlinghetti for San Francisco
19 July 2025 – 22 March 2026

Across the pond, head to San Francisco's Legion of Honor museum for its exhibition on the city's esteemed, multidisciplinary artist, Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The late artist favoured nautical motifs and writing about the political landscape. The exhibition profiles his printmaking works, including the famous *Lovers at Sea* lithograph.

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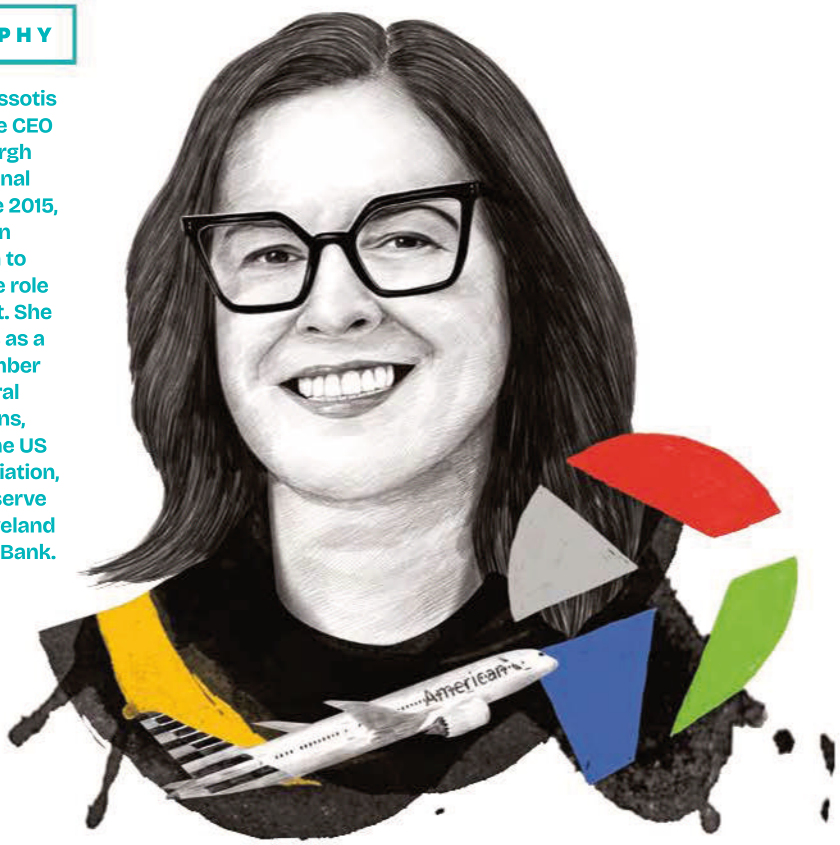
Insight

Expert opinions on the future of travel

THE BIG INTERVIEW

CHRISTINA CASSOTIS

PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CEO



‘Bartending teaches you people skills. Those lessons have served me everyday as a CEO’

Enrique Perrella learns how Pittsburgh International Airport’s CEO Christina Cassotis is leading an ambitious comeback

BIOGRAPHY

Christina Cassotis has been the CEO of Pittsburgh International Airport since 2015, and is on a mission to redefine the role of an airport. She also serves as a board member for several institutions, including the US Travel Association, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and the S&T Bank.

IN RECENT YEARS, the aviation industry has experienced positive changes as more women move into leadership roles. In North America, however, only a small number of women – just four – lead major airports, bringing unique perspectives and innovative ideas. One such leader is Christina Cassotis, whose journey from being the daughter of a Pan Am pilot to becoming the CEO of Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT) is truly inspiring.

Cassotis grew up in a household connected to aviation, influenced by her father who moved from Pan Am to United Airlines. Living with her family in New England, she experienced the realities of airline life. Despite limited vacations due to her father’s preference for staying grounded when off duty, a family trip to London when she was ten years old sparked her love for travel.

Cassotis’ journey into aviation leadership was anything but conventional. “I was bartending on Beacon Hill in Boston,” she recalls. “It was a spot where state reps and senators would come in for lunch or drinks.” It was there that she was offered a job at the Department of Energy Resources, before being recruited to work as the communications director for a cabinet secretary.

“After six months, I moved to Massport,” the owner and operator of Logan Airport in

ILLUSTRATIONS PAUL RYDING

Continued from overleaf

Boston. "I didn't even realise that airports had jobs like the one I was offered."

At the age of 29, without a college degree, Cassotis went back to school while working at Massport and eventually graduated. "As the deputy director of communications, I absolutely loved it. I thought, I can't believe I get to work at an airport."

After four and a half years, she was recruited by a consulting company, where she worked and consulted for various airports for 17 years. The unpredictable nature of the industry captivated her.

Looking back on her ascent from bartending for politicians to leading an airport, Cassotis says, "Bartending teaches you people skills – how to read personalities, manage situations and think quickly. Those lessons have served me every day as a CEO."

When Cassotis joined PIT in 2015, the airport was a shadow of its former self, having lost its bustling status as a travel hub in 2004 after US Airways abandoned it, leaving empty gates and an economic void.

"I expressed my concerns during the interview process in late 2014," Cassotis says. "I told the headhunter that if the organisation aimed to become a hub again, I wouldn't consider the position.

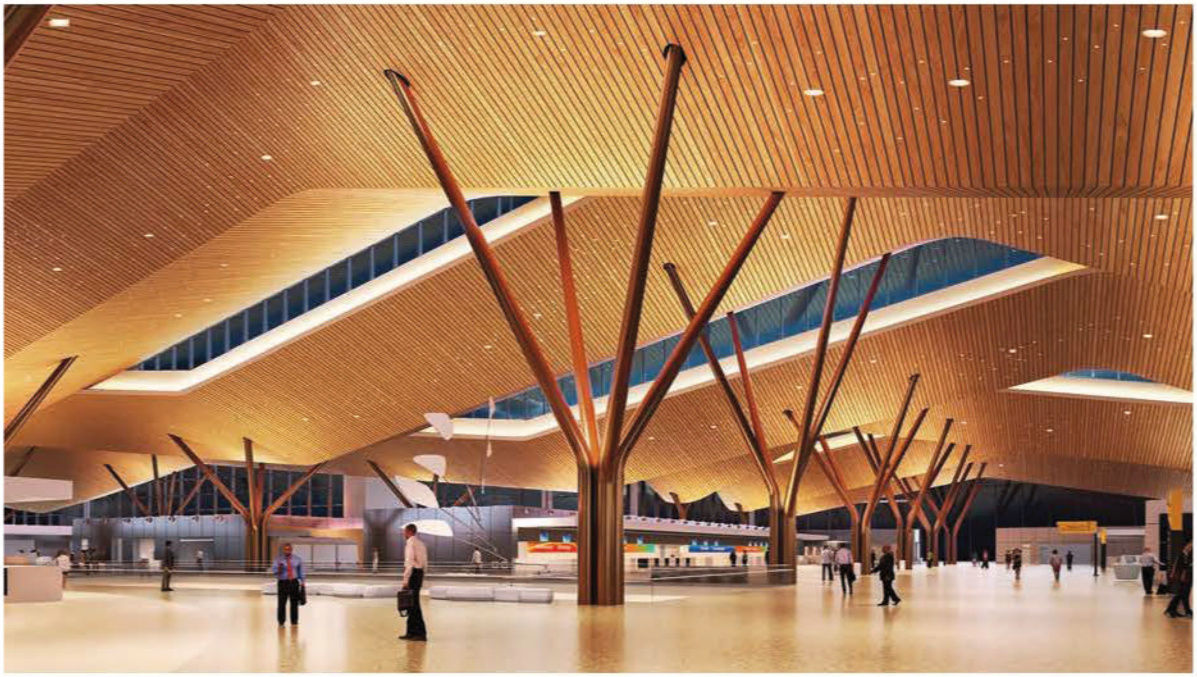
"I was very upfront about it," she continues. The world and the airline industry had changed significantly, leading her to believe that smaller markets such as Pittsburgh simply do not generate enough demand for an airline hub.

"I believed that we could succeed using a different business model," she explains. "This shift in mindset didn't imply that anything was wrong. Rather, the landscape had evolved."

Cassotis asserted that PIT could achieve success as a business. She posed the question: how could PIT redefine itself without relying on a major airline hub?

"Airlines serve markets, not airports," she states. "Our path to success is to operate as an

ICELANDAIR
UNITED



LEFT Pittsburgh International Airport's departures hall will feature tree-like columns and natural light

OPPOSITE PAGE Christina inspects the building work at the airport

IMAGES LAURA PETRILLA; PITTSBURG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

origin and destination airport.” Under her leadership, PIT has increased its destinations from 36 to 61. “We have every major US airline except Hawaiian,” she says. British Airways, for instance, has operated a route from London Heathrow to PIT since 2019, and earlier this year increased its six-times-weekly service to daily, with flights running until October 2025. Icelandair also connects PIT to Europe, and Cassotis envisions expanding to accommodate more West Coast flights. “There’s potential for more destinations in Europe and Canada,” she adds, highlighting opportunities in cargo and logistics, including the development of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) on-site.

To prepare for its ambitious plan, a crucial element of the transformation at PIT is the new terminal, which is set to open this year. Often called the most beautiful airport design in North America, the terminal is intended to capture the essence of the city with locally sourced materials, systems and innovative architecture.

“We took a user-centric approach, focusing on the needs of passengers and staff,” she explains. “A key focus is on addressing issues when things go wrong. We strive to take care of people, regardless of whether it’s our fault or not.

“The space itself is a beautifully designed building filled with light and high ceilings,” she continues. “The interior features tree-like columns and outdoor terraces, which are accessible to everyone, regardless of club membership.”

Meanwhile, inspired by the city’s Fort Pitt Bridge, a new connector bridge will reduce walking distances and offer stunning views of the city.

When asked about her ideal airport, Cassotis imagines terminals featuring more sensory rooms, nursing stations and enhanced services for travellers during disruptions. “I’d like to see airports prioritise people over just efficiency,” she says.

‘I’d like to see airports prioritise people over just efficiency. That would be wonderful’

This human-centred approach to leadership sets Cassotis apart, especially given her diagnosis of ADHD at the age of 47. “It felt like someone was unlocking something inside me, like a key turning,” she shares. “Suddenly I realised there wasn’t anything wrong with me.”

Cassotis discovered her ability to make real-time connections and understand complex systems from multiple perspectives. “I didn’t realise I could do things others couldn’t,” she says. “I can recognise people’s strengths and identify what holds them back.”

Medication has also helped. “If a task isn’t fun or urgent, I struggle to start it. The medication enables me to initiate projects that I would otherwise find difficult.”

Her story has resonated with many, and she often receives letters from people inspired by her journey. “A young man once wrote to me after his parents read my story. They told him, ‘You will find your way, just like she did.’ That touched me deeply.”

Cassotis hopes her story encourages people, particularly individuals with ADHD, to embrace their differences and recognise their strengths. “There’s nothing wrong with thinking differently,” she says. “It’s just different.” **BT**

GREEN ZONE

Sustainability initiatives at Pittsburgh International Airport

SAF ON-SITE

SkyClean US Energy plans to build a sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production facility at PIT, making it the first major airport in the US to have on-site SAF production.

AIRSIDE GREEN

Even in the cold months, visitors can access the airport’s green outdoors on the airside of the terminal, enjoying landscaped terraces and outdoor courtyards.

SOLAR, NOT COAL

PIT has developed a pioneering solar panel microgrid that uses a hybrid approach, helping to reduce electricity costs in a region that is traditionally reliant on coal for its energy supply.

WORDS
GILBERT OTT

WHERE DID ALL THE AWARD SEATS GO?

Booking seats with points is easy – when you know how to find them

FIVE YEARS AGO, saying "I can never find flights with points" was absolutely fair. Today, that's no longer the case, but millions of seats go unredeemed every year because points collectors are missing key strategies to unlock more value from the world's second largest currency. Whether a passive or active collector, if you're on the hunt for great point redemptions, here's what you need to know.

Searching once is your first mistake

To win at points, we must forget many of the things we've been conditioned to think in travel. There is no perfect time to book with points, other than figuring out exactly when flights are loaded into the system. Some airlines (BA, Qatar Airways) guarantee a certain number of seats with points in every cabin. When a flight gets loaded for sale, points seats immediately become available for redemption (typically two or four business class, four or more in economy). People who know their travel plans a year in advance, and monitor the right platforms, can pick these off as they come onto the system. Airlines almost always add more seats during the year of selling, but these initial seats are gems for some folk.

The truth is, airlines are in a tug-of-war between loyalty programmes and revenue management. Revenue wants to command the highest price possible for every airline ticket, but confidence in selling every seat changes daily – so don't give up hope.

Searching early is good, searching constantly is great, and searching within three weeks of travel could be golden. Many of the best redemptions are for flights departing within 72 hours. Not feasible for all, but glorious for many, myself included.

> 'Often it's one direction of travel that's more troublesome'

Let alerts ease your search

Many third-party tools have popped up in recent years to help connect travellers with coveted redeemable seats. If this is news to you, level up your game, because others are already setting alerts! Point.me is a good example globally, but other UK-centric companies include SeatSpy and Reward Flight Finder.

Airlines are getting better, too. Avios, the currency behind airlines including British Airways, Iberia, Aer Lingus and Qatar Airways, offers free seat alerts for people who download the Avios app. Simply plug in the dates, cabins and routes you're interested in and be alerted if things change. Virgin Atlantic offers a 'Reward Seat Checker' that allows anyone to visualise availability and pricing across an entire calendar year.

DID YOU KNOW
An estimated 62% of all miles are earned via credit card spend according to research by point.me

Don't let legs break your journey

One frustrating truth about reward flight booking is that each leg very much matters. It's entirely possible that seats are available using points on the main long-haul flight you care about – and that it's simply the short connection at either end which is returning a "no seats" error for you.

By searching each segment individually, you can pinpoint any choke points in your journey and triage accordingly. Sometimes, it can make sense to pay cash for a short-haul flight that gets you to or from the long-haul you really care about using points.

Carrying the theme of individual segments ruining entire itineraries, often it's one direction of travel that's more troublesome than the other. I recommend grabbing what you can, when you can, and tweak as time closes in. Most reward seat bookings with points can be cancelled for a full refund, minus potentially a small cash penalty, outside of seven days of travel.

If I can find availability for the outbound journey, but the return doesn't have anything, I'll often book the outbound and then actively monitor the reservation to improve a seat or a cabin – setting alerts for the return, or vice versa. More often than not, things work out!

Nearby cities unlock dream trips

If you're hoping to use points for a long journey with added comfort, sometimes a little compromise goes a long way.

Las Vegas is an example of an evergreen destination with evergreen demand. Using points to Vegas is one of the harder tasks in the game, but LA or Phoenix are both drivable alternatives, with cheaper one-way flights under US$100. It's worth considering the hour's drive post-flight to maximise your redemption options.

There's a point to being flexible, and rewards for knowing how to play the game.

Gilbert Ott is director of point.me and creator of God Save The Points

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WORDS
CERI HAND

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING WEIRD

How leaders can thrive by embracing their core individuality

HAVING COACHED THOUSANDS of artists and business professionals, I've noticed that the same challenges emerge – overcoming imposter syndrome, clarifying their voice and honing creative ideas. But real breakthroughs don't come from playing it safe. They happen when people embrace their quirks, contradictions and personal stories. This authenticity creates emotional connections, fuels innovation and sets true artists and leaders apart. If you want to make a lasting impact, it's time to get weirder.

A common fear is that embracing uniqueness will alienate others. Many worry that standing too firmly in their eccentricity will lead to rejection. Yet the opposite is true. The more clearly you define your perspective, the more you attract the right opportunities.

Take the tea brand PG Tips, for instance, which last year partnered with Oscar-winning filmmaker Steve McQueen. After eight years without a major ad campaign, the brand didn't return with cosy family kitchen scenes or nostalgic British rituals. Instead, McQueen directed *Rock Solid*, a 70-second meditation on self-doubt and resilience, starring Ashley Walters and scored by Ezra Collective. The film doesn't "sell" tea in the usual way – it transforms making a cuppa into a metaphor for progress and self-reflection. At a time when younger generations are rejecting burnout culture, this campaign speaks directly to their experience. It proves that disrupting a safe, predictable image can unlock emotional impact.

Being unexpected is a competitive advantage. AI predicts the most likely response, but the human edge lies in the absurd connection, the joyful incongruity that sparks curiosity. The businesses and creative leaders who cut through aren't those striving for polish and predictability, but those embracing their idiosyncrasies and making space for surprise.

That's why public art projects such as *Play Me, I'm Yours* resonate so deeply. Since launching in 2008, British artist Luke Jerram's initiative has transformed public spaces in more than 70 cities, placing pianos in urban settings and inviting millions to engage with music. Inspired by the quiet isolation of a launderette, Jerram saw these pianos as a way to disrupt silence and spark spontaneous conversations – some even leading to marriages. Beyond its charm, the project unearths hidden musicians and offers access to an instrument many otherwise lack. It proves that compelling ideas come from challenging the status quo and allowing people to interact with the world in new, surprising ways.

> 'Leaning into what makes you distinct isn't just an advantage – it's essential'

Ceri Hand helps contemporary artists, arts professionals and business leaders embrace their unique edge and unlock their full creative potential. With decades of experience bridging the art and business worlds, she has helped countless creatives and professionals amplify their impact, grow their income and thrive. She is also a sought-after speaker and host of the *Extraordinary Creatives* podcast.

Many professionals dilute their vision to appeal to everyone. But real impact comes from connecting personal stories, lived experience and values to create something with bite.

The business world is shifting. Traditional leadership models are giving way to a more creative approach. The most compelling voices embrace contradiction and personal truth. In an age when authenticity is the most valuable currency, leaning into what makes you distinct isn't just an advantage – it's essential.

Being weird isn't about eccentricity for its own sake. It's about doubling down on what makes you *you*. It's about showing up fully – flaws, contradictions and all – because that allows people to connect with you. The businesses that thrive aren't just efficient. They're memorable. The leaders who inspire aren't just knowledgeable. They're relatable because they know their strengths and embrace their flaws.

Artists experiment, take risks and trust their instincts, even when the outcome is uncertain. Business executives and entrepreneurs can learn a great deal from this mindset. The next time you face a challenge or unexpected shift in plans, ask yourself: how would an artist approach this? The answer might just lead to your next breakthrough.

IMAGES **RICKY NARITO; ADOBE STOCK**

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FLAWLESS FINISH Montano works her magic

Q&A

BLUSH HOUR

Hannah Brandler catches up with Kay Montano, a London-based make-up artist and CHANEL Beauty Ambassador who has worked with several famous stars

What attracted you to the cosmetic industry?
I knew that I didn't want to do a 9-5 office-based job, and I've always been very creative. I wanted to do something artistic in the entertainment world. That was unusual when I was at school – make-up wasn't a profession that anybody knew about. I got a lucky break at 16 when I met pop star Kate Garner. Within a month, I did her make-up for the cover of *The Face* – London's style bible at the time. The cover is now on display in the V&A in London.

How have you built strong connections?
Stylists often recommend hair and make-up artists to actors. I've worked in fashion for so long and spent decades with stylists and their assistants, so I've built up wonderfully permanent relationships. Stylist Leslie Fremar, for instance, suggested me to Jennifer Connelly because she was an assistant on all the shoots I did for *American Vogue*.

What have you just worked on?
I've just returned from the *And Just Like That...* press junket in

Paris. It was bonkers because it's a big, ensemble cast and *Sex in the City* is so deep in people's memories. It was 13-hour days, with not much time to eat or sleep, so I'm a little fried!

What inspires your make-up designs?
The make-up is absolutely inspired by the outfit. You find out what the actor's wearing, then make your suggestions and try to sell the idea. I worked in fashion for years and my job was to decide what a woman's face would look like based on the outfit. It's instinct.

What are some of your most memorable 'looks'?
The Face cover was a huge deal, as was my first *Vogue* cover with Christy Turlington when I was 21. I've also worked with Kate Moss a lot – I did her make-up for the famous Calvin Klein Obsession fragrance campaign in 1993, which was displayed around the world.

How do you deal with working under pressure?
I'm very used to time pressures. It separates the experienced from the non-experienced. You have to create incredible work under any circumstance and there's no excuse.

How do you cope with bad weather conditions?
For make-up artists, it's not so bad – actresses don't get wet because they're sheltered. I feel for hairdressers, as they have no control over the wind. The first time I worked with Julianne Moore, it was so windy in Venice that her hair was horizontal.

The bigger problem for me is paparazzi photos. You couldn't get worse photography and those are the photos that everyone sees. Paparazzi just point and shoot with flash and the photos are very unkind. The relationship between make-up and light is everything. You could have the most beautiful make-up in the world, but it looks bad when it's badly lit and badly photographed! There's nothing you can do – you have to keep your fingers crossed. Make-up artists now take pictures of their work so we have some control.

How often are you travelling?
In my industry, you travel constantly. My life used to be on a plane – I was the female equivalent of George Clooney in *Up in the Air*. It looks glamorous on the surface, but life is chaos when you have a Platinum airline card. It's a dysfunctional and unhealthy lifestyle.

Life is much easier now, as I travel no more than once a month. My previous work has helped me to get to this place.

What are your tips for keeping skin hydrated while travelling?
It's all about hydration inside and outside. Drink a lot of water and take electrolytes. Topically, you need to lock hydration into the skin so use products that trap moisture and then a good thick cream on top. My favourite is the CHANEL Hydra Beauty Micro Sérum, which hydrates the skin and has little particles that reflect light. Hydrated skin bounces light whereas dehydrated skin is matte and very difficult to work with.

What's been your most rewarding travel experience?
There's been so many truly amazing trips. Back in the day, I travelled to Vietnam for two weeks for *American Vogue*. One week was with Kate Moss and she was wild at the time. She insisted we go out every night – she could handle it and no one else could! We don't do trips like that any more. Why would you spend money to fly to another part of the world when you can give a jumper to a fashion influencer? Times have changed.

What's most challenging about the work?
You can't make plans. Work comes first. You're in the service industry – I'm a lady-in-waiting. You need to be nice to everyone and bend over backwards. It's hard, but I'm a pro.

STAR POWER The cast of *And Just Like That…* **BELOW** Julianne Moore

> 'On flights, it's all about hydration. Drink a lot of water and take electrolytes. Topically, you need to lock moisture into the skin'

What are your make-up essentials?
My go-to's are the Le Correcteur de CHANEL Longwear Concealer, a lip liner, and the Le Recourbe Cils de CHANEL Eyelash Curler. These are what I use when I need to conceal my under-eye circles, give myself some colour and make my eyelashes perky.

Do you keep to the 100ml rule?
I can't decant everything, I'd be here all day. So I put luggage in the hold. I don't want to run out of my special things, and I don't want to go shopping.

What are your thoughts on inflight amenity kits?
They're better than nothing! It depends on the airline – some are better than others. I think airlines should affiliate with more brands – then you'd get the best of the best.

What's your inflight entertainment pick and accessory?
A book – it's a wonderful time to read because you've got no distraction. And I swear by Boots flight socks– not only for the decompression on the plane, but also from standing. It ensures you have ankles at the other end!

What's a dream destination?
I've been spoiled so I don't have major wanderlust any more, but I'd love to visit Florence and Positano in Italy. I'm happy anywhere with beautiful weather, food and my friends.

What's next?
Julianne Moore's junket for the Apple TV+ film *Echo Valley*. She's a lovely, wonderful and graceful human being.

IMAGES **JANE MCLEISH-KELSEY; GETTY IMAGES**

Kit
BVLGARI
LE GEMME
OROM
BVLGARI
EMULSION HYDRATANTE VISAGE
HYDRATING FACE EMULSION
BVLGARI
Baume pour les Lèvres
Lip Balm

BVLGARI
Lingette Nettoyante
Cleansing Towel
OPEN HERE
BVLGARI
EMULSION HYDRATANTE CORPS
HYDRATING BODY EMULSION
Tissues
Emirates
BVLGARI
48H

or

s?

Dominic Keith weighs up the case for amenity kits

PHOTOGRAPHS **PIXELEYES**

I must admit that I’m an amenity hoarder. One of our cupboards at home is literally overflowing with all the inflight pouches and airline loungewear I’ve collected over the years. It has frequently threatened to end my marriage, but, at least for now, the kits are staying.

For those unfamiliar with the term, amenity kits is the official name for those nifty pouches and cases handed out by airlines in premium cabins – particularly on long-haul routes. These typically contain a range of items for inflight use, which can range from a dental kit to eyeshades, toiletries or a branded pen. As is the case with most amenities that airlines offer, the quality can vary significantly.

My collection comprises several duplicates, which always make great gifts for overnight visitors in need of a toothbrush, skincare and eye mask. The pouches can also be handy for storing items like pens and cables in drawers at home, or used to transport things like chargers, cables and earbud cases on your next trip abroad. Small and flimsy kits can even double as purses for loose change on a beach holiday.

That said, amenity kits are a divisive topic. They are loved by many, but criticised by others who see them as wasteful and useless. Are such kits trash or treasure?

LUXURY LINE-UP

Inflight amenities have been a part of air travel since the 1950s, when airlines like Pan Am and TWA would offer passengers across all cabins cotton balls to muffle the sound of the aircraft engines, along with chewing gum to help ease ear pressure during take-off and landing. As time went on, and flights got longer, further items were added to the mix – including razors, sewing kits, combs and nail files. Other items disappeared: today’s casual trainer-clad passengers have little need for a shoehorn. In my view, the more goodies the better!

It was not until the 1980s that amenity kits evolved into the state we find today – limited-edition pouches formed by partnerships with fashion houses and skincare brands. Collaborations often extend to showcasing local artists and products, too. Great examples include Finnair’s long-standing partnership with local design house Marimekko to create vibrant cases, Cathay Pacific’s collaboration with Hong Kong-based brand PYE for first class pyjamas, and Japan Airlines’ link with Shiseido skincare for its first class kits.

Some airlines change their kits every few quarters or so – others keep the same collaboration for years. Qatar Airways, for instance, has successfully partnered with Diptyque for the past three years. (I myself possess 48 of the kits and counting.) Cathay Pacific, meanwhile, recently renewed its partnership with British brand Bamford for its latest first class kits.

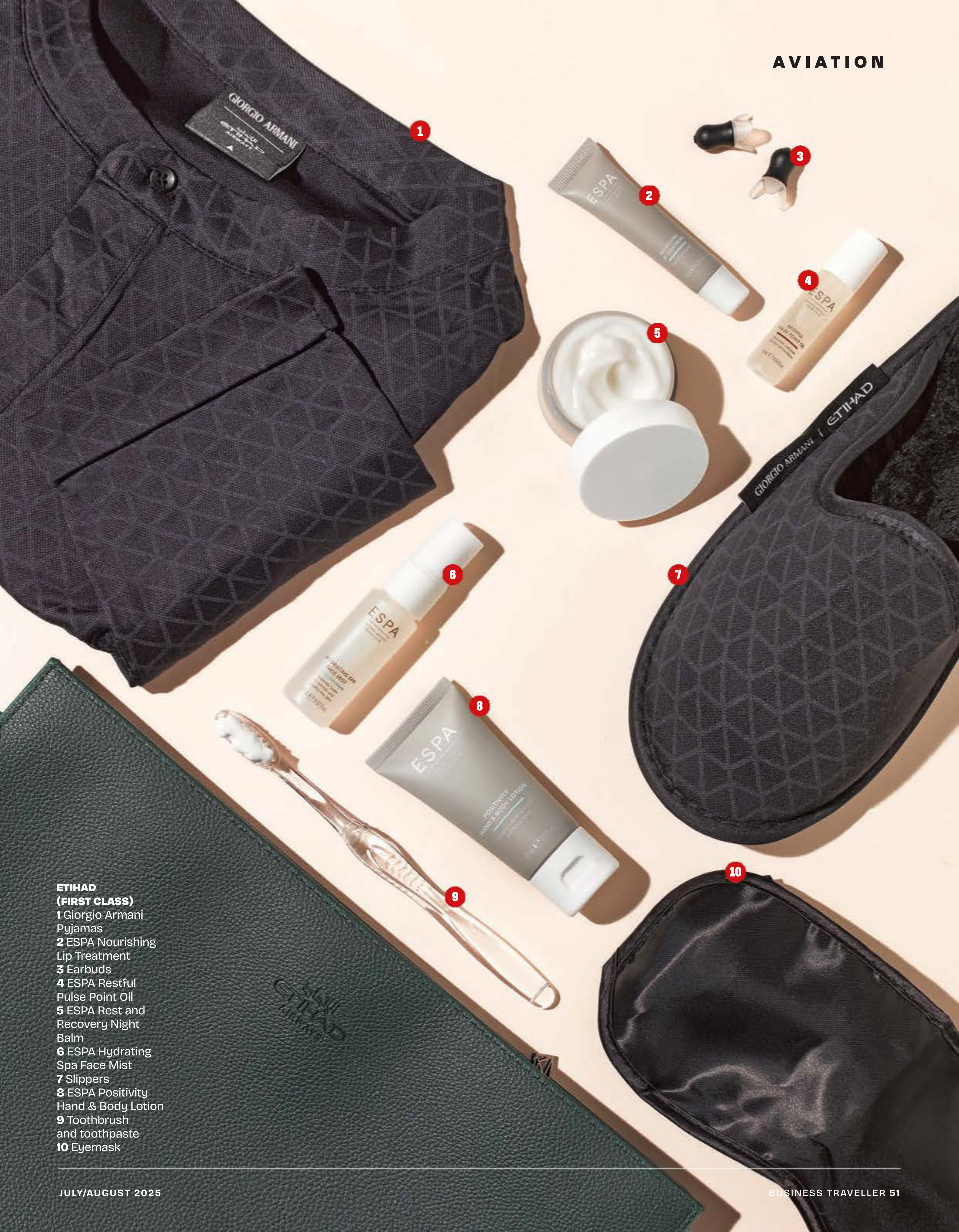
Obviously, individual airline budgets play a crucial factor when deciding on the look and contents of an inflight kit. While certain no-frills pouches in premium economy can be produced for as little as US$2 a pop, higher-quality business and first class versions with significantly better materials and toiletries can reach US$40, according to supply chain executives.

Among the higher-end kits, I’m a fan of Emirates’ well-stocked first class pouches in collaboration with Bvlgari, featuring 30ml Bvlgari fragrance bottles as well as a deodorant stick – an item missing from the kits of most airlines (and one that will surely make you more popular among fellow travellers).

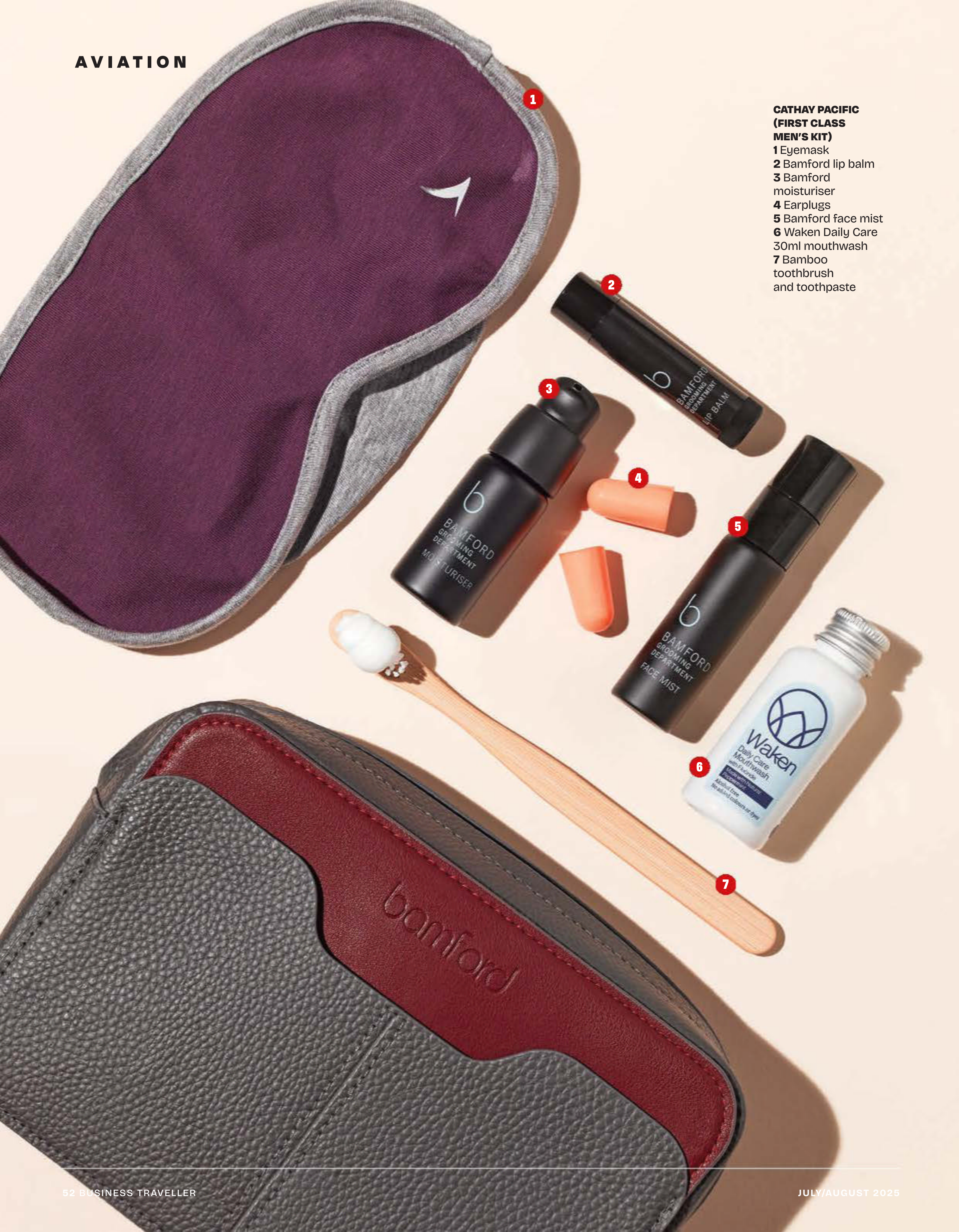
In recent years, there have been a flurry of exciting luxury partnerships in the amenity kit world. EVA Air has introduced new Giorgio Armani-designed business class kits, with outbound passengers treated to a black pebble-grain hard case with the designer-branded coin purse inside, while inbound passengers receive a vintage-style bag and matching key tag. Etihad has also partnered with Giorgio Armani and ESPA for its kits.

Delta Air Lines, meanwhile, has teamed up with fashion house Missoni for its Delta One business class passengers. These amenity kits sport the luxury brand’s recognisable textured zig-zag pattern on the exterior, while contents include Grown Alchemist skincare products, a bamboo toothbrush, →

PREVIOUS PAGE
Emirates’ first class amenity kit, featuring products by Bvlgari



ETIHAD (FIRST CLASS)
1 Giorgio Armani Pyjamas
2 ESPA Nourishing Lip Treatment
3 Earbuds
4 ESPA Restful Pulse Point Oil
5 ESPA Rest and Recovery Night Balm
6 ESPA Hydrating Spa Face Mist
7 Slippers
8 ESPA Positivity Hand & Body Lotion
9 Toothbrush and toothpaste
10 Eyemask


1
2
3
4
5
6
7
BAMFORD GROOMING DEPARTMENT LIP BALM
BAMFORD GROOMING DEPARTMENT MOISTURISER
BAMFORD GROOMING DEPARTMENT FACE MIST
Waken Daily Care Mouthwash
bamford

CATHAY PACIFIC (FIRST CLASS MEN'S KIT)

1 Eyemask
2 Bamford lip balm
3 Bamford moisturiser
4 Earplugs
5 Bamford face mist
6 Waken Daily Care 30ml mouthwash
7 Bamboo toothbrush and toothpaste

toothpaste, an eye mask, ear plugs, socks and a pen. Over at China Airlines, its partnership with Moschino marked the fashion house's first-ever cross-industry partnership with an airline, with four unique designs available across the carrier's business and premium economy cabins – complete with exclusive luggage tags.

FANCY FINDS

Teaming up with luxury brands for amenity kits is not a new phenomenon. Back in the day, premium passengers were treated to popular Rimowa-designed kits on airlines including Lufthansa, Thai Airways, ANA and EVA Air. Sadly, these mini hard-case kits are nowhere to be found these days.

Instead, a whole new industry has sprung up: online trading for these now-elusive collectors' items. Start a search on eBay and you'll find various sellers marketing the mini Rimowa hard cases at about US$150 including shipping.

For rarer or older kits including a Thai Airways Rimowa case in gold, or a Thai Airways first class pouch with La Mer branded skincare, offers can reach a hefty US$500. Price tags even surpass US$1,000 for business class kits from Russian carrier Aeroflot, while further vintage finds include a SAUDIA hard-case amenity box from the early 1970s for US$68 – still fully stocked with its original contents, including a full-size piece of soap, nail clippers and nail scissors.

There are some pieces in my own collection, however, that I would never dream of parting ways with because of the fond travel memories they evoke. These 'special' kits are kept neatly in their original wrappings at the very back of the closet, away from prying eyes.

Such prized possessions include a colourful collection of Thai Airways and Lufthansa first class Rimowa cases, old Cathay first class bags in collaboration with Zegna, vintage Emirates pouches, and quite a few vintage United Airlines kits, including from the early 2000s when the carrier still offered first class.

A MIXED BAG

There is an argument to be made that amenity kits are quite a wasteful perk – and something we could easily abandon for environment's sake. To avoid disappointing collectors, however, airlines have introduced a number of environmentally friendly options.

In 2019, Virgin Atlantic introduced its sustainable 'Goodie Bags' in its Upper Class and Premium cabins. These amenity kits are crafted from responsibly sourced and FSC-certified recyclable kraft paper, saving the airline 945 tonnes of plastic per year compared to its previous kits. Inside you'll find products such as a bamboo toothbrush, recycled paper pens and aluminium tubes – plus REN Clean Skincare toiletries. The airline also collects any unused items from amenity kits to make up future pouches.

When ANA rolled out its premium kits in partnership with UK-based ETTINGER last year, the carrier stressed that the pouches were crafted from natural cotton canvas and recycled materials, with the cosmetics made from organic materials grown on a recycling-oriented farm that does not use pesticides or chemical fertilisers.

ABOVE
The 1985 Delta amenity kit

And until several years ago, Singapore Airlines did not offer amenity kits in business class, despite being regarded as one of the world's most premium carriers. Instead, individual products were made available upon request. SIA has since changed tack and now offers amenity kits (in collaboration with New York-based perfumery brand Le Labo), however, these remain on a request-only basis as part of the airline's ESG programme. This seems like a sensible way to avoid unnecessary wastage while still elevating the passenger experience. But most airlines still prefer to proactively offer them so passengers are aware of their existence and can decide for themselves.

When disembarking the aircraft on my most recent flight between Hong Kong and Europe, I still found myself surprised at how many people left the amenity kits behind. I resisted the urge to grab and add them all to my collection at home – my closet isn't big enough! **BT**

IMAGES **COURTESY OF DELTA**

DESIGN DEBRIEF

Business Traveller **chats with Addy Ng, creative director, design and products (amenities and sleepwear) at deSter, a leading provider of food packaging and serviceware concepts to the aviation and food service industry.**

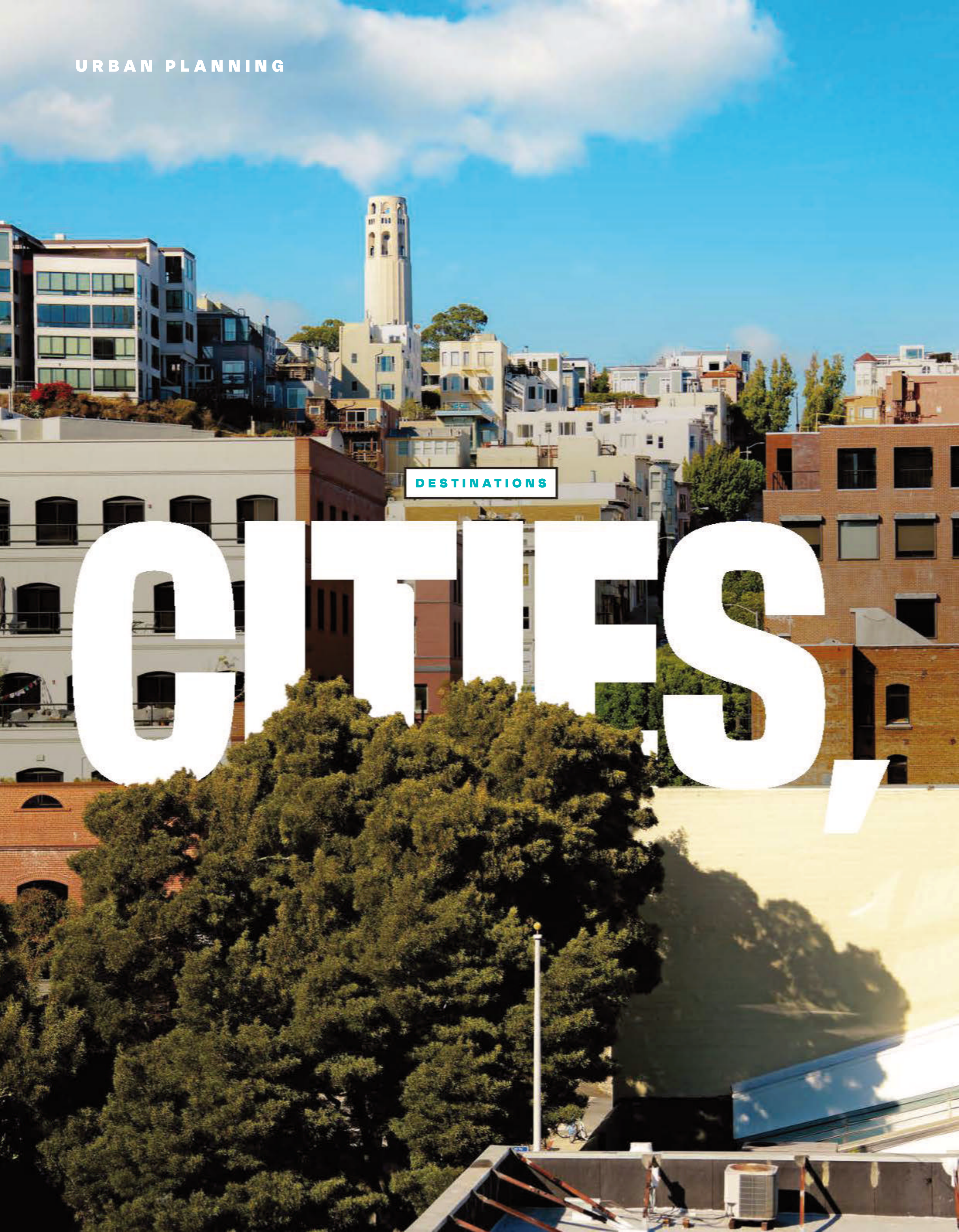
How long have you been designing amenity kits and was this always your dream job?
It's been more than 15 years since I joined the industry. I came from a fashion design background and was designing luxury handbags. I have always been designing for fashion or luxury brands and creating collections of accessories for their retail networks. But in moving to designing amenity kits and sleepwear for airlines, I get to work with so many brands and customers, understanding them and curating one-of-a-kind products, presenting our stories and getting to see them onboard. I am still as excited to work on every project as I was on my first day. I think I am one of the lucky few who gets to do what I love on a daily basis.

How many kits have you designed or collaborated on?
I'm proud of all the amenity kits and sleepwear I have put onboard over the years. You can find my designs on more than 50 airlines across the globe – in all different classes. Going forward, you can look forward to testing our new Lufthansa amenity kits for the Allegris launch.

From start to finish, how long can it take for a new kit to hit the premium cabins?
A lot of projects can take up to three years before they are onboard. We work with different airline teams, from marketing to procurement, to make sure we cater to all their needs. Finding the right brand, designing, sampling, curating and fine-tuning all the products can take months. Then we need to get the final sign-off from the airline and the brand before production, which could take anything from six to 12 months.

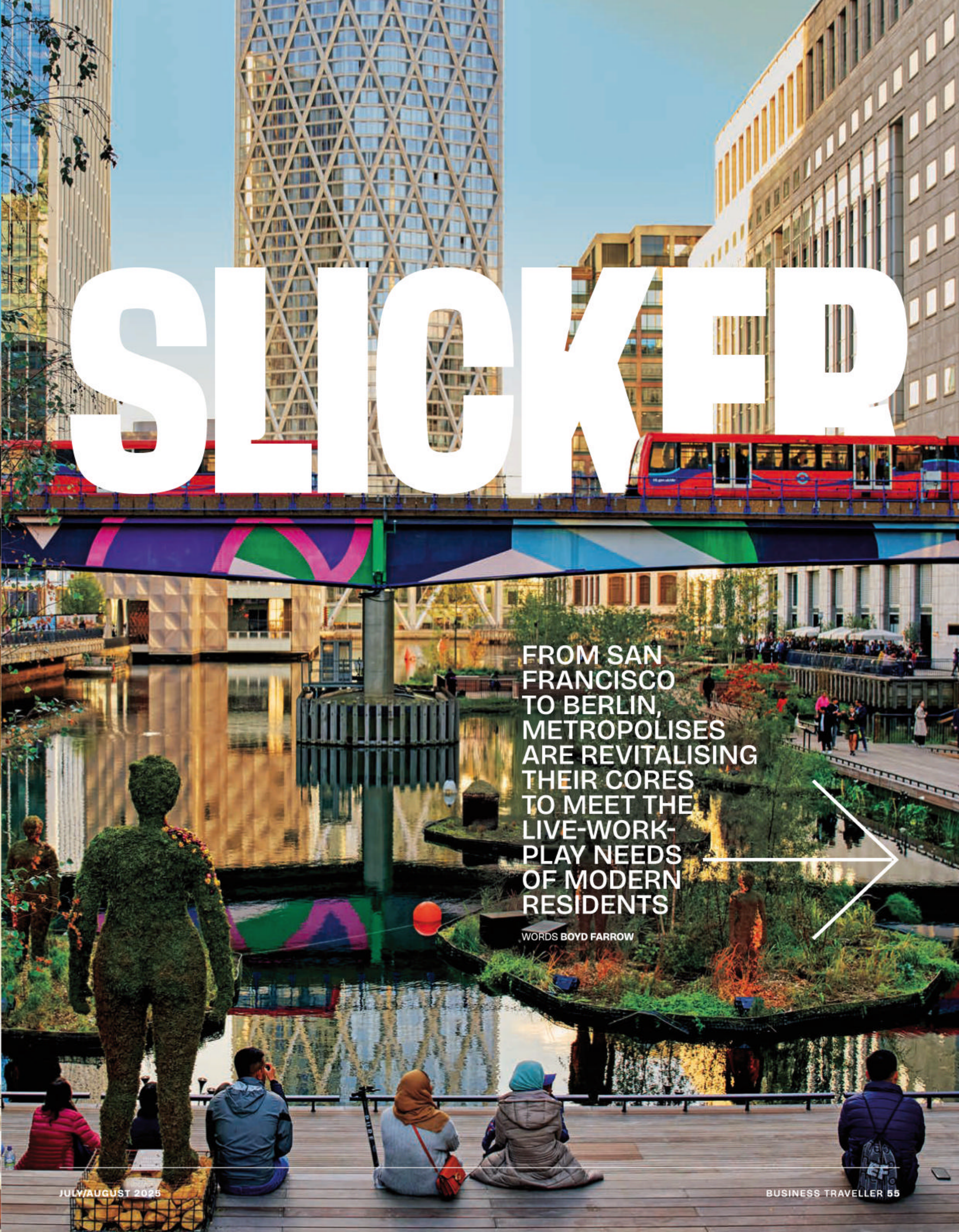
Do customers give you creative leeway?
As to what goes into the kits, there is a lot of research done by the airlines as well as by consultancy firms. There are passenger questionnaires and other data showing what items are most popular and what is most often left behind. I have worked with so many airlines and they are all very different.

Are budgets constrained?
Some are strict on their budget while others might be willing to pay more for a truly original concept. Usually, the Middle Eastern carriers have the highest budgets and more items in their amenity kits.



DESTINATIONS

CITIES,



SLICKER

FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO BERLIN, METROPOLISES ARE REVITALISING THEIR CORES TO MEET THE LIVE-WORK-PLAY NEEDS OF MODERN RESIDENTS

WORDS **BOYD FARROW**

Five years after the Covid pandemic changed how we work, rest and play, cities around the world are adapting. Here, we look at how urban spaces are being rethought, reworked and, in many cases, made more liveable

THE SQUARE ROUTE

Jony Ive could have ridden out the pandemic on a megayacht or in the grounds of a secluded château. Eight months earlier, the world's most famous industrial designer had left Apple Inc. where he helped create the iPhone, iPod and Apple Watch – and was worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

But instead of doodling in isolation, he spent much of 2020 in downtown San Francisco, looking at real estate in the Jackson Square district. This dense pocket of coffee shops and boutiques was where he decided to reboot his life, co-founding a new multifaceted "creative collective" with another global design superstar, Marc Newson – the Keith Richards to his Mick Jagger.

Embracing the inner city at a time when so many businesses were closing – and indeed, so many tech bros were turning their back on San Francisco – seemed perverse. But so much about Ive's new venture is counterintuitive – and totally personal.

The company is called LoveFrom, explains Ive, in honour of Apple founder Steve Jobs, who said one way to express appreciation to humanity is through "the act of making something with a great deal of care and love". As for the choice of headquarters, "Jackson Square already felt like home," he adds. "I came here in 1989 on my first trip to the US and loved its creative energy. Since moving to San Francisco in 1992, I've come to appreciate it even more for its resilience.

"It is such a beautiful neighborhood, a mix of history and culture," continues Ive, who was born in London in 1967. "It was the center of the Gold Rush city, which, over the decades, attracted artists, musicians and writers. There's the West Coast, San Francisco – and then there's Jackson Square. We feel incredibly lucky to be able to build on all this and reinforce its reputation as a centre of excellence for design and creativity."

In 2020, Ive bought an 1,106 sqm two-story building on Montgomery Street, Jackson Square's main thoroughfare, for a

reported US$8.5 million. He wanted to turn its rear parking lot into a garden, but to do this, he needed to own another building on the block. So a year later, he bought a 3,066 sqm four-storey building for $17 million. Ive is thought to have now acquired real estate worth more than $137 million on a single block as his creative vision takes shape. Eventually, two buildings will be occupied by LoveFrom designers, who are currently working on an array of projects, including the interior of Ferrari's first electric car and outerwear with AirPod-like magnetic fasteners for Italian fashion label Moncler.

Similarly, Newson's eponymous London studio has worked for dozens of disparate companies, with Newson simultaneously holding senior positions at clients from time to time. In 2014, he became the designer for special projects at Apple, working on the Apple Watch before quitting with Ive.

Another building in Jackson Square will house a new company Ive is developing with OpenAI. Other occupants include venture capitalists Emerson Collective, founded by Laurene Powell Jobs, and Thrive Capital, an investor in OpenAI.

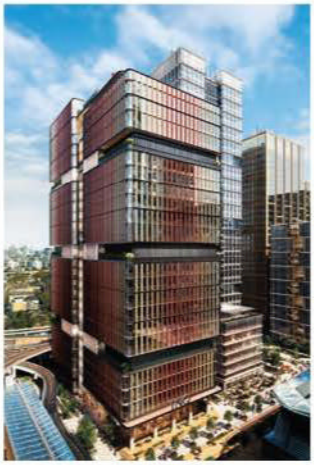
Fellow tenants are paying far less rent, as Ive is keen to attract a new generation of talent – architects, musicians, filmmakers, writers, engineers and artists – to the area. "I absolutely love being part of such a connected community," says Ive, a man clearly invigorated by the prospect of multiple collaborations and organic innovations."San Francisco's impact on the world is vastly disproportionate to its size. It has given an opportunity to so many people, including me, and it feels really important and very right that we are making this long-term investment in this neighbourhood and deeply committing to it."

Unsurprisingly, there is much goodwill from community leaders. "It's incredible to see this type of investment downtown. LoveFrom's plans are exciting as the redevelopment will help draw in new and larger tenants, while helping to retain existing ones," says Robbie Silver, CEO of the nonprofit Downtown SF Partnership. "We hope others see the value of being part of the transformation. These opportunities build community and identity and can lead to inspiring places for a mix of industries."

STAR WHARF

It would be a stretch to say that Canary Wharf, the financial district created from scratch in London's eastern docklands in the early 1990s – anchored by the city's then tallest skyscraper, One Canada Square – is beloved by many Londoners. For its first 25 years, few of the capital's eight million or so inhabitants trekked to this glassy enclave, unless they worked at a corporate HQ or lived in one of the pricey penthouses on the waterfront.

But five years since London ground to a halt, things are changing. Plans unveiled in 2015 for the Wharf to evolve into more of a mixed-use neighbourhood are being dramatically – and rapidly – augmented in the light of the post-pandemic shift in attitudes to work, rest and play.



OPENING SPREAD, FROM LEFT Montgomery Street, San Francisco; Eden Dock, Canary Wharf, London **CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** Jackson Square, San Francisco; rendering of One North Quay, Canary Wharf, London; Eden Dock, Canary Wharf

According to Canary Wharf Group, the developer behind the 52-hectare regeneration project, the district is already home to 3,500 residents – and that is set to double. Boosted by the Elizabeth line, it's also becoming one of London's fastest growing lifestyle destinations.

"More people spent more money here in 2023 than ever before," says Stuart Fyfe, the group's head of retail, leisure and hospitality. "More importantly, it has become a real city within a city, offering waterside living, green spaces and a range of amenities – grocery stores, pharmacies, health clubs – all within a 15-minute walk from most people's front doors."

This year will see the opening of a 78-room lifestyle hotel, House of Gods, and a live music venue, Amazing Grace – two additions to the neighbourhood that until recently would have seemed bound for trendy Shoreditch. Earlier this year, Vertus Edit, the Wharf's first aparthotel, also opened, wooing leisure travellers as much as digital nomads. Locals and visitors can also enjoy the UK's largest free outdoor public art collection and Eden Dock, an oasis of floating gardens, wading birds and rare flora created with Eden Project – a popular tourist draw in Cornwall.

Yet while Canary Wharf adapts, Fyfe says it is also betting on jobs of the future. When completed in 2027, the 23-storey One North Quay will be Europe's tallest and most technically sophisticated life-science lab – a vertical campus, supporting an ecosystem of cutting-edge firms from multinationals to start-ups.

Designed by New York architecture giant KPF, One North Quay will be the cornerstone of what is fast becoming a vibrant life-science hub. Over the past two years, more than 30 businesses have clustered around the nearby London Innovation Centre.

KPF's vision for a neighbouring skyscraper, the 45-storey, 1.1 million-square-foot 8 Canada Square, is even more head-turning. Its proposal is to radically remake the iconic HSBC headquarters – which is relocating to smaller premises in 2027 – as a tower of apartments, shops, restaurants, workspaces, cultural attractions and patches of high-rise greenery. →

Strikingly, the plan involves cutting chunks out of the building to create triple-height corner terraces. Views would be trumped only by those from the rooftop garden in the clouds.

SLEEKNESS IN SEATTLE

Can a metropolis safeguard its future by reconnecting with its past? This is what Seattle is trying to do by rebuilding its central waterfront – a once-in-a-generation transformation to reshape the city's public spaces while reinventing its identity.

Though the eight-hectare Waterfront Park won't be fully finished until later this year, its most transformative component, Overlook Walk, opened last autumn. This sweeping elevated walkway links downtown Seattle to Elliott Bay, with its panoramic views of the city and Olympic and Cascade mountains. The design incorporates a new aquarium pavilion, rooftop garden and amphitheatre looking west towards the sunset. Incredibly, for almost 70 years, the city's residents had effectively been cut off from their waterfront by a double-decker viaduct that cradled a portion of highway.

"The effect that this transformation of the central waterfront will have on Seattle cannot be underestimated," says James Corner, founding partner of Field Operations, the architectural firm behind Overlook Walk. "What was Seattle's rear entrance is now this welcoming space with wide promenades. It's like they've flipped the whole city around and given it a new identity."

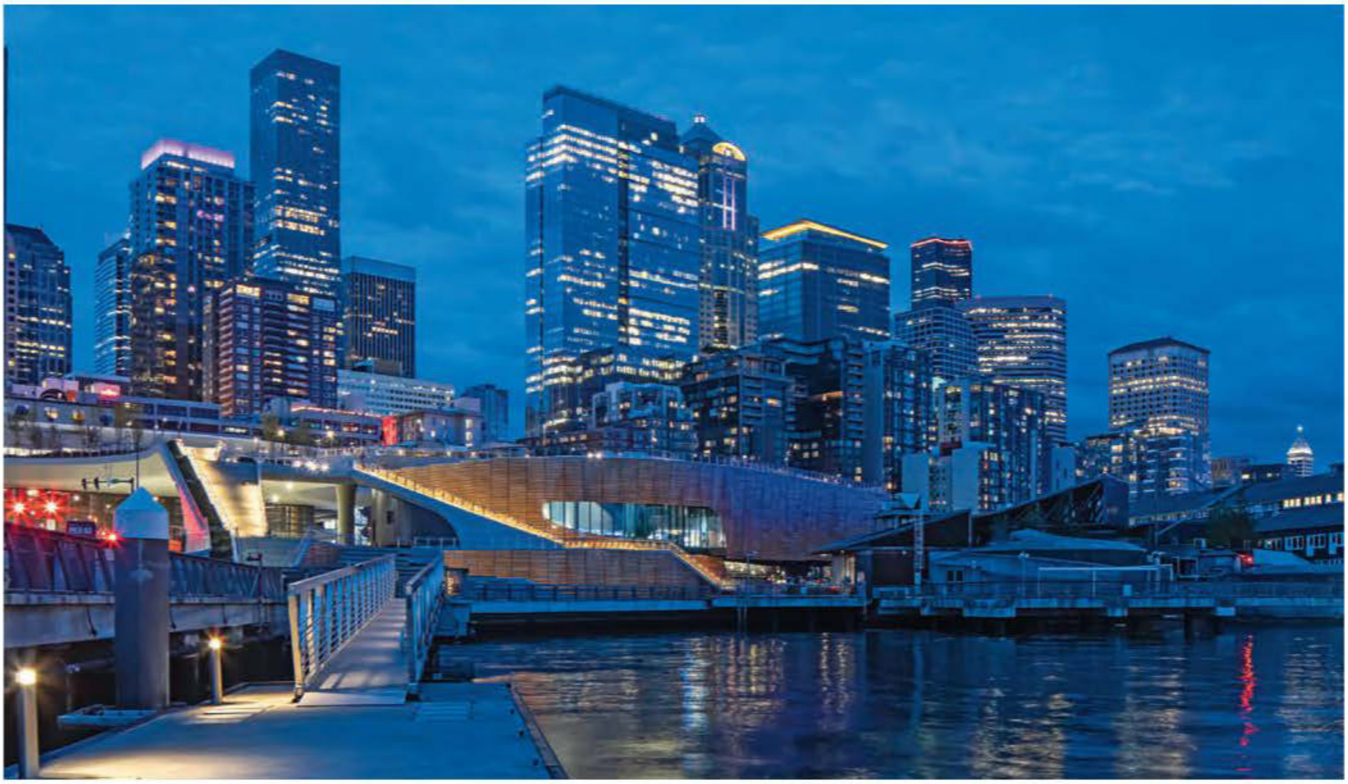
Although Waterfront Park broke ground after Covid arrived, Corner believes the project's timing was prescient, as the pandemic boosted our understanding of the benefits of well-designed open spaces. "In the 70s, parks and walkways were undesirable places, associated with crime," he says. "Now they are seen as the hallmark of great cities."

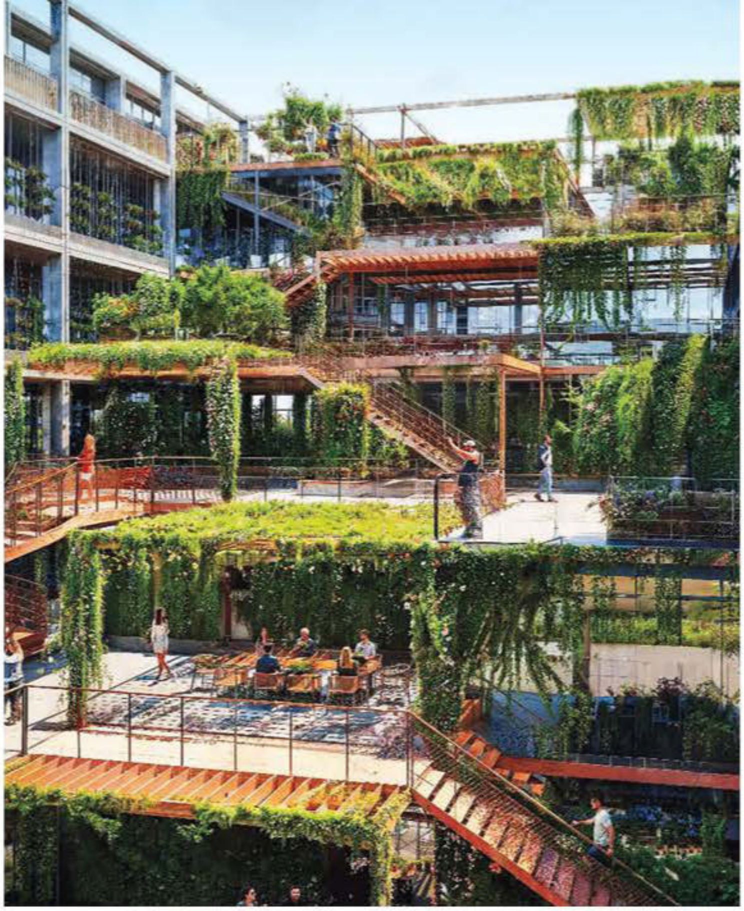
The project, he notes, can also help futureproof Seattle – already home to Microsoft, Amazon and Starbucks – as cities compete for business in a new era of hybrid work. The $800 million cost of redeveloping the waterfront was met by the city, state, private donors and a tax on downtown property owners. "The thinking was that the improvements will boost downtown businesses, which over time will bring in more taxes for the city," says Corner. The revamp is also expected to bring in more conference attendees and tourists.

Corner points out that another Field Operations project, Manhattan's elevated High Line park, was conceived as a place for New Yorkers to exercise. In 2019, the year before the pandemic, a survey found that tourists accounted for 80% of all its visitors.

'It's like they've flipped the city around and given it a new identity'

BELOW Overlook Walk, Seattle





DAS REBOOT

Imagine two city blocks with interconnected roof gardens "inspired by coastal agricultural landscapes", with lush plant-lined pathways winding down through the whole complex to the riverside. Visitors to this elevated Eden can pick berries from trees in "a playful orchard with overgrown pergolas" next to rows of beehives. Below is an area where lettuces and herbs grow aquaponically above a fish farm, the nitrate-rich water fertilising the plants.

In contrast to their lush surroundings, the blocks are designed as clear cubes and staggered so the structure fades into its environs. Meeting rooms blend into orchards and terraces.

This is the vision for the Vertical Farmhouse, which will be part of Behrens-Ufer, a much larger redevelopment project in southeast Berlin. Here, on the site of what was regarded as the "model city of industry" in the 1920s, construction has just begun on a new ten-hectare urban quarter intended to shape the working and living environment of the future.

DIEAG, the developer behind Behrens-Ufer – named after the influential architect Peter Behrens – will revamp several industrial landmarks. These include the turbine factory Behrens designed in 1909 for AEG, then the world's leading electrical company. Such landmarks will be integrated into a leafy campus designed for modern labs, life-science outfits and light industrial production facilities.

"Our vision is to redefine city life, focusing on people and their needs," explains Felix Gold, managing director of DIEAG. "We aim to transform the former industrial site into a business location that is both inspiring and sustainable."

One of the first anchor tenants is ASML, Europe's most valuable tech firm, which manufactures machines that make semiconductor chips. According to Gold, the Dutch giant has rented more than 1.2 square hectares of production space for what will be its second location in Berlin.

Behrens-Ufer will also have hotels, art and cultural venues, as well as social facilities such as a nursery school. According to Gold, the entire campus will be self-sufficient, thanks to a mix of photovoltaics, hydropower and thermal energy.

Nevertheless, Gold insists that the project will not be a burg in a bubble. There will be public access to all outdoor spaces, including a brand-new half-mile-long promenade that will be constructed along the River Spree.

NEW NEW ROCHELLE

As the pandemic's regional epicentre in March 2020, New Rochelle, a city in Westchester County, New York, had a lot to bounce back from. Yet not only is New Rochelle now the state's fastest-growing city, but Covid also spurred it into prioritising the creation of a more adaptive and flexible urban infrastructure, repurposing public spaces, relaxing zoning laws and upgrading its transit system. The most striking change is the LINC, an ambitious project to transform three lanes of the city's Memorial Highway – dubbed "highway to nowhere," as only the first stage was built – into more than three hectares of greenery, nearly a mile of cycle lanes and a 1,300 sqm plaza.

LINC, which is set to break ground in the second half of 2025, will also reconnect the city's centre with downtown for the first time since 1958, when the highway's construction separated it from the historically Black neighbourhood. "It will give residents and visitors a destination for community building and public art," says Adam Salgado, New Rochelle's commissioner of development, adding that the project will incorporate elements of several much-loved parks and boulevards, from New York's High Line to La Rambla in Barcelona.

"The pandemic underscored the need for more open, accessible public spaces and traffic-free areas that are good for health and wellbeing," says Salgado. "But projects like the LINC don't just improve the environment – they also attract investment and create jobs. We're setting a standard for how cities can go beyond lip service and use sustainability to fuel real economic development." The city claims zoning initiatives have paved the way for up to 1.1 million sqm of new development, including 6,370 housing units, more than 92,900 sqm of retail, just under 223,000 sqm of office space and 1,200 hotel rooms.

To revitalise its business district, Salgado says New Rochelle is making it easier for entrepreneurs to open bars and entertainment venues, while rules pertaining to parking, outdoor dining and shopfronts are being relaxed. A city fund will underwrite some of the risks associated with new retail ventures.

A cornerstone of the redevelopment will be a new transit centre, described as "a modern, well-connected hub" with a "multi-purpose plaza and green public spaces". By 2027, New Rochelle will be the only Westchester city with direct Metro-North commuter rail access to both Manhattan's Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station.

FROM ABOVE Rendering of Vertical Farmhouse, Berlin; rendering of North Avenue, New Rochelle, New York

Salgado sees the revamped New Rochelle as far more than another commuter town. "We're seeing people spending fewer days in the office and they're seeking a community that offers more than just housing," he says. "We're building a city that meets its residents' needs today and anticipates the changes of tomorrow." **BT**

IMAGES COURTESY OF LOVEFROM; COURTESY OF CANARY WHARF GROUP; COURTESY OF HENN ARCHITECTURE; © LARA SWIMMER/ESTO; COURTESY OF STARR WHITEHOUSE

THE WILD COMEBACK OF

From famine to fortune, seaweed has loyally stood its ground as a steadfast staple along Ireland's Atlantic Way

WORDS **KATE BETTES**

IRISH SEAWEED

"I KNOW IT'S A CLICHÉ,"

says the pink-skinned, shirtless man beside me in dripping board shorts, "but it's grand when you get in."

Just beyond, surfers bob in freezing waves, the air sharply scented with salt and pine.

"Better after the sauna though!" he grins, stamping wet sand from his feet and climbing into a steaming, barrel-shaped sauna in the car park at Lahinch – one of a growing number of pop-ups along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way.

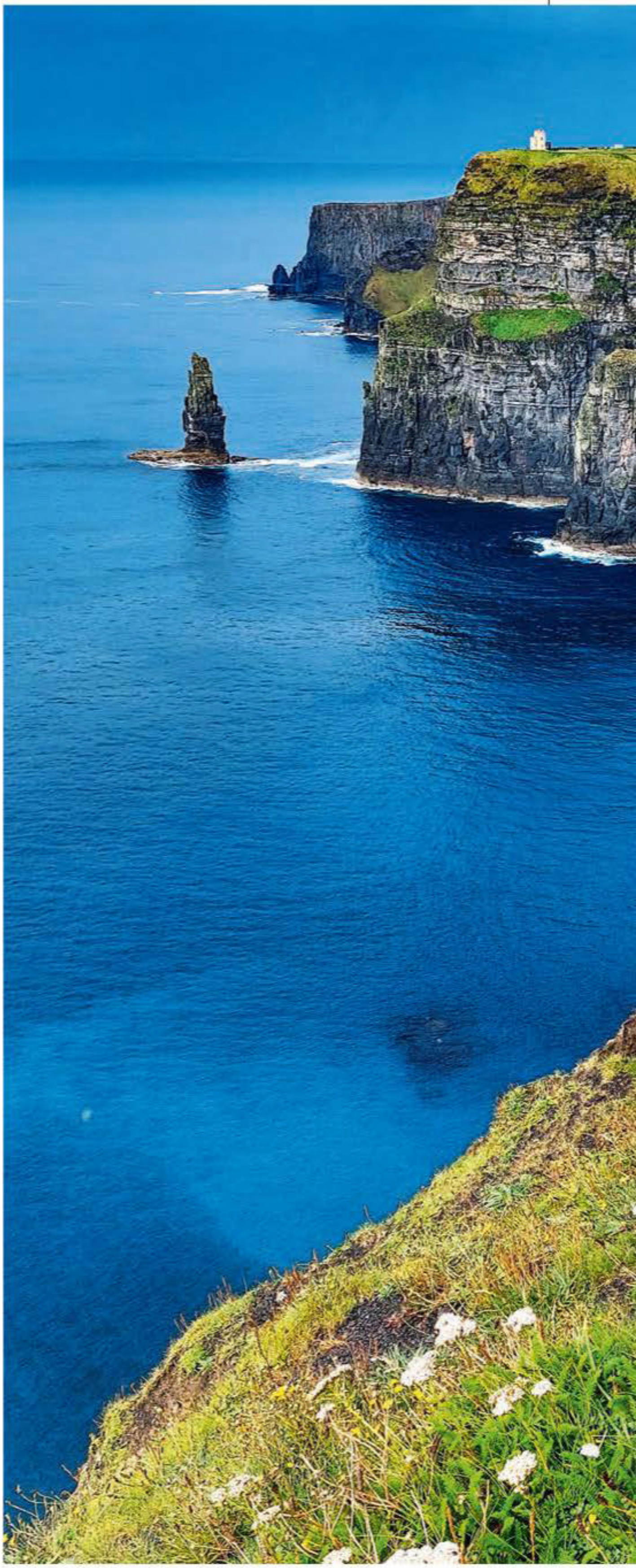
Outsiders might see an inhospitable, weather-bitten seaside (my Australian upbringing means I'm sensibly bundled in a puffer jacket and woolly hat). For the people who live here, however, there is a fierce affection for this environment – it's considered a place that heals. And that's, in no small part, thanks to seaweed.

Nothing embodies the twin revival of coastal appreciation and wellness-focused activities more than seaweed. An integral part of ancient life, the ocean flora is enjoying a resurgence in popularity – not just as something to eat, but as something to forage, bathe in and lather on. And like everything and everyone in Ireland, it's got a cracking story to tell.

ANCIENT SOIL AND SEA

Ireland has always been shaped by its ocean – not just along its sea cliffs, but far inland. Take the Burren: a vast, alien landscape of fractured limestone stretching across County Clare, close to the Cliffs of Moher. The Burren's grey flagstones might seem barren, yet you'll find tombs older than Stonehenge, while deep fissures known as scailps house rare wildflowers found only in the Mediterranean, the Arctic and here.

But when it comes to the taste of Ireland, what matters lies beneath your boots: the compacted remains of long-dead sea creatures from a long-vanished tropical ocean. Squiggled mollusc trails and ancient oysters embedded in cave walls. This prehistoric seabed now filters into the groundwater, feeding the land with calcium.



RIGHT the Cliffs of Moher **BELOW** Harvesting for Voya Seaweed Baths, County Sligo

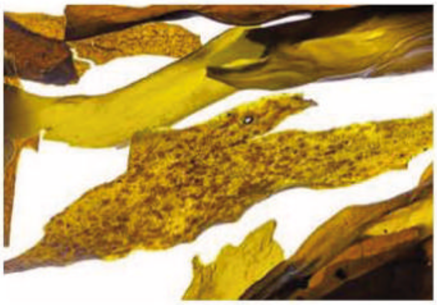
Why the geological trivia? It's what gives the cows and sheep here their exceptional flavour. "Believe me, everything that grows in the world is dependent on the rock," shares Siobhan McDonald, my guide along the Atlantic Way. "The limestone is to animals as calcium is to

humans. Limestone-based grass feeds animals, giving them strong bones and good-quality meat."

It's not just a story of soil. That same elemental mix also feeds the sea. Along the shoreline, calcium-rich runoff collides with cold, mineral-packed tides. It's ideal conditions for another kind of harvest: tidal greens prized for their richness and resilience.

A MEANS OF SURVIVAL

Sea vegetables are among the most nutrient-dense plants in the world, packed with vitamins, minerals, iodine and iron. Of the 23,000 known varieties, one stands out in the briny waters for its role in shaping the Irish diaspora: sea moss.



"It's distinguishable, sort of spongy," says Lucianne Hare, founder of Nourished in Nature – the seaweed foraging and wild wellness arm of Knocknarea Farm in County Sligo. As we meander down Strandhill Beach, she holds up a clump of maroon-coloured sea moss. "It's full of antioxidants, vitamin A, vitamin B1 and B2."

Its other moniker is 'Irish moss' – a nod to the pioneering role Irish immigrants played in algae farming off Massachusetts in the 1850s. Harvested for carrageen, a natural thickener still used in food today, this small algae spurred Irish immigration to the US. But the name also calls back to the disastrous *An Gorta Mór* – the Great Hunger.

Once again, it was the land that shaped survival. Fertile waters bred seabeds and 'Irish moss' fed the starving population during the famine of 1845-52. Despite the shoreline crop's literal life-saving role, its association with the famine cast a long shadow – marking it for generations as a food of hardship and shame. But like the tides that sweep sea moss in and out of Sligo Bay, seaweed's fortunes in Ireland are shifting once again.

EATING THE ATLANTIC

Seaweed harvesting has been revived by trendy, boot-clad foragers with tide charts in hand.

In Sligo Bay, groups like Nourished in Nature lead would-be harvesters across salt-glistening rocks, teaching them to read tides and snip – not strip – the crops. "Haircut, not harvest," →

SURPRISING SEAWEED FACTS

CONTAINS MORE CALCIUM THAN MILK

Some seaweeds, like kelp, pack more calcium than milk, helping your bones stay sturdy, straight from the sea.

GREAT FOR YOUR HORMONES

Seaweed is loaded with iodine, which your thyroid needs to keep your hormones ticking nicely.

NATURE'S BUILT-IN SUNSCREEN

Certain seaweeds can absorb UV rays and scientists are studying them as an eco-friendly sunblock option.

CLEANS THE AIR, FEEDS THE EARTH

Seaweed soaks up CO2 like a natural air filter. When dried and crumbled onto soil, it can help crops grow.

is the golden rule. Along the way, you learn to spot species such as dillisk, samphire and sea spaghetti, whose uncultivated flavours are as nutrient-laden as the waters they come from.

But even without stepping into the shallows, coastal crops are hard to miss. Along Ireland's western edge, they show up in bakery windows and café menus – the kelp butter and green-flecked cookies have an umami hit that triggers cravings for 'just one more bite'.

In home kitchens, the ocean plant features in smoked salts, dried greens and heritage dishes like the silky, softly set carrageen pudding – family recipes often pulled straight from Mam's cookbook.

It stars in high-end fare, too. JP McMahon, founder of the Galway Food Festival and Michelin-starred restaurant Aniar, champions Ireland's shoreline treasures. His menus are rooted in native ingredients: tidal botanicals, shoreline herbs and oysters. A 24-course tasting menu features morsels like kelp and sea beet, lobster and roe, potato and buttermilk, and eel smoked over ash.

> 'The magic of seaweed extends beyond the edible arena'

And back in the Burren, seaweed shapes the signature oak-smoked organic salmon at the Burren Smokehouse. The high-quality flavour comes from a mix of craft and careful curation. Fillets are cured in Irish sea salt – fine as powder and gentle on the flesh – then cold-smoked over oak shavings from a neighbourhood furniture maker.

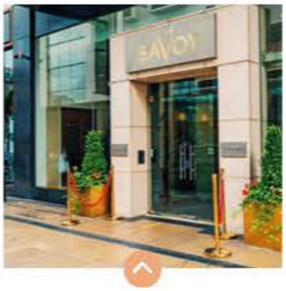
The result is a texture that holds all the natural oils and vitamins without overwhelming the fish's clean, briny character. The secret lies in the blend of native seaweeds, including dillisk, kelp and carrageen, foraged just 30 minutes away in Quilty. Each batch is gently dusted with this "salad mix" before smoking, giving the fish its distinct, mineral-rich finish.

A family-run business, the Burren Smokehouse was founded by Swedish-born Birgitta Curtin and her husband Peter. Here, you can watch the process up close, sample slices onsite, or pick up vacuum-packed fish and a bag of the good (sea)green stuff to bathe in later…

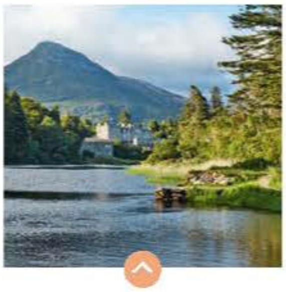
BELOW Cod, seaweed and lovage at Aniar

WHERE TO SLEEP ON THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

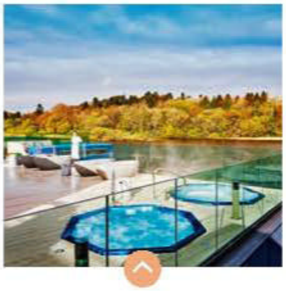
LOUGH ESKE CASTLE, DONEGAL (CO. DONEGAL)
Five-star luxury in a lakeside castle with lavish new suites.



THE SAVOY HOTEL, LIMERICK (CO. LIMERICK)
Elegant old-school stay in the heart of Limerick city.



BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE, CONNEMARA (CO. GALWAY)
An 18th-century estate once owned by a Maharaja and world-famous cricket player.



ICE HOUSE HOTEL, BALLINA (CO. MAYO)
Kick back in outdoor seaweed baths with views over the tidal River Moy.

SOAK IN THE PAST

Indeed, the magic of seaweed extends beyond the edible arena. Seaweed bathing might sound like the latest fad, but in Ireland, it's anything but. Its use as a therapeutic treatment dates back to at least the 19th century, when people would steep in algae-rich tubs to ease weary joints. In fact, the surf-famous Strandhill and nearby Enniscrone were once beloved Edwardian seaside escapes for such practices.

Today, wellness pilgrims flock to VOYA Seaweed Baths in Strandhill, which has revived and modernised the practice into a holistic, algae-powered ritual. Treatments begin with a steam to open the pores, followed by a deep, silky submerge in hand-harvested algae. As the water warms, an elemental gel is released that soothes joints and deeply hydrates the skin.

"The water gets almost viscous," explains VOYA's co-founder Neil Walton, referring to the calcium alginate that leaches from the plants into the baths. "It's like nature's own serum."

Used today by everyone from long-haul flyers to elite athletes, the baths harness the naturally alkaline properties of seaweed and seawater to help rebalance pH and reduce inflammation.

If you're lucky, you'll land a tub by the window with a view of the crashing waves, the scent of moss and kelp clinging to your skin.

IMAGES **AWL IMAGES; TOURISM IRELAND/JULIA WEIGL; PETER MCABE; GETTY IMAGES; ANITA MURPHY; SHUTTERSTOCK**

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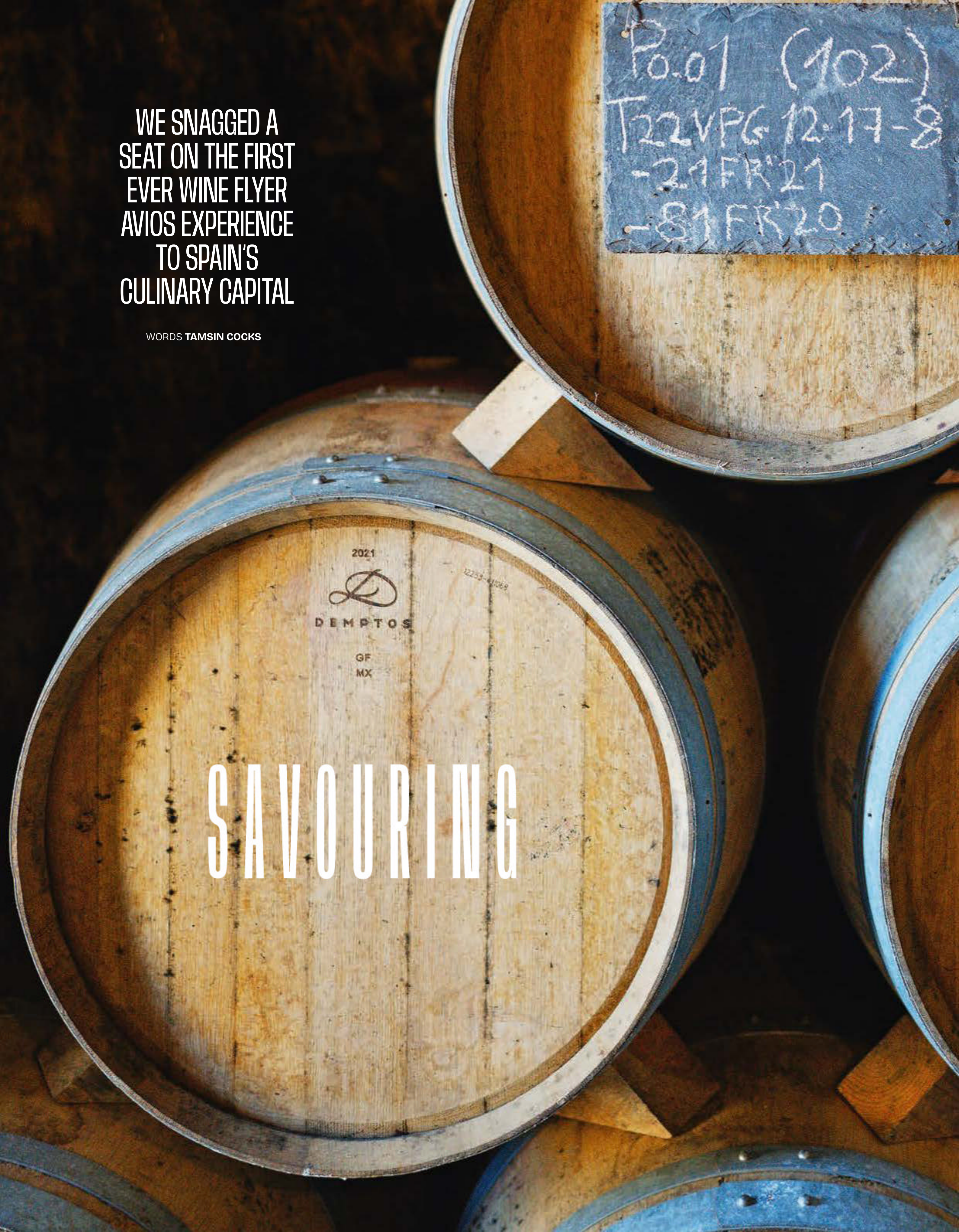
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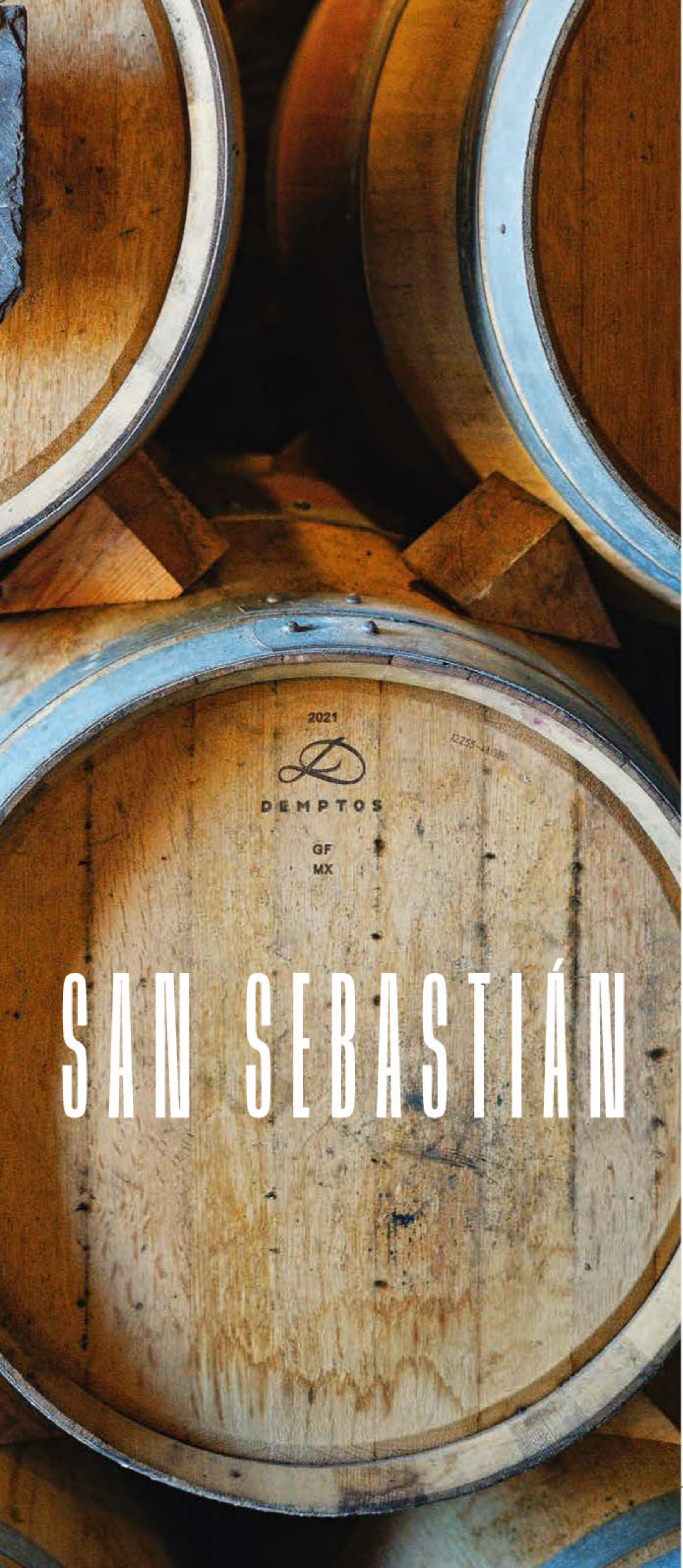
WE SNAGGED A SEAT ON THE FIRST EVER WINE FLYER AVIOS EXPERIENCE TO SPAIN'S CULINARY CAPITAL

WORDS **TAMSIN COCKS**

SAVOURING



SAN SEBASTIÁN

EVER wondered what 50,000 Avios can get you? How about private charter flights to San Sebastián with onboard wine tasting, a modern Basque culinary experience and a full day of guided tours through Rioja's best vineyards.

That was how wine enthusiasts (and a few lucky journalists) chose to spend their points for the launch of the first ever Wine Flyer Avios Experience with British Airways in May.

Launched in 2022, The Wine Flyer is an online wine retailer under IAG Loyalty that lets British Airways Club members order premium vintages and access exclusive deals (or trips!) while earning or burning their miles.

Following BA's successful launch of Avios-only flights in 2023, this offering goes one step further to combine flights, wine and gastronomy for a delicious adventure.

TASTING NOTES OVER THE TANNOY

The adventure began with the specially chartered flight BA7031, departing London City Airport at 1100 on a cosy two-by-two Embraer jet.

Digital boards emblazoned with The Wine Flyer Avios Experience signage added flair to the check-in experience, while staff in matching polo shirts guided guests through to a VIP boarding area. Even boarding passes were customised for the occasion.

Onboard, bespoke headrest covers served as a subtle but stylish reminder that this was no ordinary flight. But the real treat came with an inflight wine tasting led by Kelly Stevenson, director of Jetvine drink-travel consultancy, in association with Wine Flyer. Passengers sampled two whites and two reds paired with a plate of tapas – a sign of the regional flavours awaiting us. Broadcast over the tannoy were a →

G-LCY
AMSS 29

HIGH FLYER The trip began with a specially chartered BA flight

THE WINE FLYER

The Wine Flyer is one of IAG Loyalty's success stories. Here's how Q1 2025 shaped up in numbers

91,000
bottles sold

£2,400
biggest single order

14.4 MILLION
Avios issues

78.2 MILLION
Avios redeemed

20%
customer base growth

51%
increase in orders compared to 2023

VINO WITH A VIEW Wine tours followed by lunch (and more wine) in the sun

IMAGES **H2 CREATIVE DIGITAL/THE WINE FLYER**

→

series of tasting notes, highlighting the fruity character of a 2019 Marqués de Riscal Arienzo Rioja Crianza, and why a crisp Sauvignon Blanc worked well at altitude.

Two merry hours later, we touched down in the lush and picturesque San Sebastián, where a private coach whisked us to the heart of the city for the next stage of the experience.

MODERN BASQUE GASTRONOMY

San Sebastián is a fitting foodie launchpad for this new Avios experience. Renowned for its culinary scene, the city currently boasts 21 Michelin stars across 12 venues, while also drawing in the next generation of talent.

Our first evening was spent in the presence of such newcomers. The Basque Culinary Centre, which offers Masters degrees in cutting-edge F&B fields (plus forthcoming courses in craft beer and non-alcoholic beverages), has partnered with the LABe Restaurant to showcase its students and graduates.

Perched on the top floor of the Tabakalera building, the evening began with a sparkling wine reception, as a classic Spanish guitarist serenaded guests on the fairy-lit terrace. Inside, a variety of food stations displayed Basque gastronomy in a new light, from the artful Tortilla 2.0 to a reimagined Spanish potato salad.

These were thoughtfully paired with vintages like a Campillo Crianza Rioja and the Sierra Cantabria XF Rioja – all available on Wine Flyer – to fuel lively conversation and new connections. Slightly tiddly, comfortably full and very happy, we drifted home to prepare for a visit to wine country.

VIVA LA VINEYARDS

An early morning wake-up call was swiftly remedied by an eye-candy-filled journey. Our two-hour drive took in lush fairytale valleys, sparkling riverbends and fascinating microclimates – we entered one of the many mountain tunnels in glorious sunshine and exited in a near-total blanket of mist. While San Sebastián is notoriously rainy, La Rioja, a valley protected by mountains, is typically drier – which the grapes prefer.

Our first port of call was Bodegas Campillo, a modern winery perched next to the medieval village of Laguardia – a car-free fortified city built on a labyrinth of underground tunnels converted into wine cellars.

Here we enjoyed tours of the winery's cavernous cellars and onsite art gallery, followed by sensational wine tastings with plates of hand-carved jamón and a gourmet lunch. As a surprise treat, each guest received a personalised bottle of wine – one to turn into a candle holder souvenir.

The next visit was Bodegas y Viñedos Sierra Cantabria, with an impressive wine fortress carved 12 metres down into the rocks, with cool underground cellars to store endless vaults of wine. We enjoyed a summery rosé in the sun-drenched grounds, accompanied by some very experimental canapés.

Our third and final tour was at its sister venue, a modern winery with scientific fermentation tanks and a fantastic al fresco terrace overlooking picture-perfect vineyards. By now, we had all got to know one another and conversation was flowing as freely as the wine.

My dining companion, Emma Deans, shared her thoughts on the experience: "This has been better than I expected. I thought it might be a load of old codgers, but it's been fabulous. Interesting, informative and good fun. The food was great, the wine was even better. Really well organised and well put-together. I'd definitely do it again."

Fellow guest Anthony Richards was in agreement: "It's been absolutely incredible. Everyone just seems to be having a great time. In terms of the value proposition, I'm staggered. It's not just a case of them getting you to this destination and outsourcing a wine tour – we're getting personalised bottles and all the crew have been involved in some way – it's just been magnificent."

> 'Part of the point is that this is an experience you couldn't buy with money'

CHEERS TO THAT From fine wine (above) to fine food (below), guests enjoyed a sumptuous gourmet experience

If you did want to put a price on it, 50,000 Avios (plus £25) roughly equates to around £500, which is incredible value when you consider return flights alone could easily cost £200. But part of the point is that this is an experience you couldn't buy with money – from the thoughtfully curated itineraries to the camaraderie of a plane-full of like-minded guests.

Three wineries and an incalculable number of glasses later, our bus ride home was a laughter-filled riot, complete with a live stream of the Eurovision final and cheers for our driver "Lewis" (Hamilton) to beat the competing buses home. The combination of high-jinx and high-flying adventures delivered a memorable and rewarding experience – one that we're eager to see replicated elsewhere across the network! BT

WHERE TO STAY

Many guests appreciated that accommodation was not included as part of the experience, since it gave them more control over budget, location and hotel type.

I stayed at the Hotel Maria Cristina, a Luxury Collection Hotel by Marriott, and one of the city's most lauded five-star establishments. Built almost 125 years old to cater to holidaying royals and aristocrats, the hotel is a stunning grand dame. From my Juliet balcony, I spied tourists pausing to take in its magnificent facade – and resisted the urge to wave like royalty. From the extravagant breakfast spread in the grand, gilded parlour, to tiny details like chocolate at turn-down and an unbeatable location, this hotel offers an exceptional – but pricey – stay, with rates starting from around €650.

24 hours in...
LONDON

Grab your weekender, you're in for 24 hours of touring and tasting across London

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
DAISY | GREEN

YOU'LL BE HARD PRESSED TO flick a few scrolls on foodie TikTok without being served some clips from the iconic, Aussie Daisy Green Collection. Spanning underground speakeasies, water-top terrace boats and vibrant street-side bistros – these stunning venues have the menus to match. If you're plotting a city break to the Big Smoke, you need to stop by some of these gems. Here's how we'd do it:

DAY 1: AM

Check in early and head straight to the original Daisy Green, a quaint Grade II listed corner café tucked just behind March Arch Station. Buzzing from 7am, you can grab your signature flat white and a very 'Fancy Bacon Roll' and slip straight into London village (20 Seymour Street, W1H 7RF). A brisk two-minute walk and you're on Oxford Street, right by the iconic Selfridges department store where you'll be lost for hours.

CLOCKWISE: The original Daisy Green venue; Daisy Green's 'Fancy Bacon Roll'; a selection of cocktails at Larry's Bar; the Peggy Jean terrace boat

DAY 1: PM

Once you're shopped out, you'll want to cram in some culture. Twenty minutes by taxi is South Kensington, the museum hub. Here you can check out gems like the Natural History Museum, V&A and the Science Museum. Before you do, grab your seat on Glamarama Green's sun-filled terrace. Cocktail in hand, it's perfect for people watching. Go for a stack of freshly made blueberry pancakes or keep it strictly business with the 'Healthy Start' (10-12 Exhibition Rd, South Kensington, London SW7 2HF).

Early evening, there's no place like Theatreland. Pre-theatre, explore The National Portrait Gallery, free and open late on Fridays and Saturdays. By 5pm, you need to be at Larry's Bar, one of the city's most exclusive watering holes. Originally built as coal storage in 1896, this underground speakeasy at the bottom of the National Portrait Gallery invites you to sip on an award-winning McBean Martini or a Francis Bacon Orange (a Champagne Negroni). Grab a signature club sandwich amongst the art and enjoy the city's finest live jazz, all before 7pm. Savour the taste by purchasing the Cocktail's at Larry's book on your way out (Larry's, National Portrait Gallery, St. Martin's Pl, London WC2H 0HE).

Post-theatre, window shop your way down Regent Street until you get to Heddon Street. Find Ziggy Green and head downstairs to discover 'Colony Room Green', an immersive art installation bar modelled off the original bohemian Soho drinking den, the Colony Room, which closed in 2008. This place was home to the likes of Francis Bacon, David Bowie, Damien Hirst and Kate Moss. Order a nightcap at 2008 prices and enjoy the late-night piano (Colony Room Green, downstairs, 4 Heddon St, London W1B 4BS).

DAY 2: AM

Have a lie-in then take a walk to Holland Park café for the perfect flat white. Explore the Kyoto Garden and relax in this city oasis. From here it's time to head down to Richmond Park – an iconic stop on any London itinerary. Stroll the gardens, take in the panoramic views from the hill and – if you're lucky – spot a herd of deer roaming around. A twenty-minute walk from here you'll find Peggy Jean. This stunning restored barge mixes quintessential English boating charm with Australian beach club vibes with unparalleled views of the Thames and Richmond Riverside. Peggy Jean is home to some of the best sunset views in the city –perfect for perching with a cocktail as the sun goes down. Sit on the top deck (walk-in only) and order the exploding clay fired bread and a selection of delicious skewers and dips from the rooftop oven. Book ahead for the pontoon and enjoy sharing tomahawk steaks and large plates (Peggy Jean, The Boat, Bridge Boat House, Riverside, Richmond TW9 1TH).

Fuel the perfect trip
daisygreenfood.com

Dear food diary...

Check out some of our foodie favourites across The Daisy Green Collection

Daisy Green

The Fancy Bacon Roll with flaky paratha roti, spicy hollandaise, perfectly poached eggs and crispy shallots, topped with fresh chili

Larry's Bar

The McBean, an award-winning take on a Dirty Martini infused and clarified with lemongrass and olives, and the house club sandwich

Peggy Jean Riverside Green

The exploding clay fired bread and open fire sharing skewers from the top deck oven or the dry aged tomahawk steak

SPONSORED CONTENT

Dine

Adventures aren't the only thing we've got an appetite for.
Explore the best restaurants on our radar this month.

HUNGARIAN & PORTUGUESE

Essencia Tiago & Éva, Budapest

Embark on a Michelin-starred culinary journey in the heart of Budapest. At Essencia, chef Tiago and his wife Éva bring together the best of Hungarian and Portuguese cuisine. Their passion for both cultures blends in perfect harmony, creating a unique fusion of flavours. In an intimate setting with blue and white tiling, the restaurant's warm ambience engulfs you in luxury, reflecting the couple's dedication to their craft. Every detail is a testament to their creativity and unmatched hospitality.

Essência Restaurant Tiago & Éva
1051 Budapest, Sas utca 17.
+36 70 600 0315 | info@essenciarestaurant.hu
essenciarestaurant.hu

INTERNATIONAL FINE DINING

Cella, Antwerp

Overlooking the Kattendijkdok in Antwerp, Belgium, Cella blends culinary precision with warm hospitality, offering a unique experience that feels both elevated and effortless. With its refined interior, curated beats, thoughtful service and seasonal cuisine, this restaurant ticks both boxes of informality and elegance. Led by chef Christophe De Koninckx, the kitchen delivers expressive yet balanced dishes made from the highest-quality ingredients. Whether you're hosting a business lunch, enjoying dinner as the sun sets or marking a special occasion, Cella provides the right setting: stylish yet unpretentious. The in-house Moodjay curates the music with care, soundtracking your dining experience for ultimate enjoyment. A standout feature is Cella's spacious terrace with panoramic harbour views – it makes dining al fresco truly breathtaking. For those extra special evenings, the Private Dining room offers seclusion and exclusivity without losing out on the signature Cella vibe. Overall, this isn't just a place to dine — it's a place to unwind in the moment with your loved ones.

Kattendijkdok-Oostkaai 21b, 2000 Antwerp | +32(0)3 535 05 69 | cella.be

JAPANESE

Regent, Hong Kong

This celebrated dining destination showcases the genre-defining Japanese cuisine of world-renowned chef, restaurateur and author Nobu Matsuhisa. Amidst majestic views of Victoria Harbour and the city skyline, diners can indulge in a vibrant ambience with warm and attentive service. Savour Nobu's inspired dishes crafted with top-quality ingredients and Peruvian flavours. Omakase and à la carte options are complemented by bespoke craft cocktails and Nobu sake, brewed exclusively by Hokusetsu Brewery for Nobu restaurants worldwide.

18 Salisbury Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong,
+852 2721 1211 | regent.hongkong@ihg.com
hongkong.regenthotels.com/dining-destination

STEAKHOUSE

Nusr-Et Steakhouse, Abu Dhabi

Located on Al Maryah Island – Abu Dhabi's premier lifestyle and business destination – Nusr-Et Steakhouse brings together exceptional steak and theatrical flair all in a striking waterfront setting. Founded by global icon Nusret Gökçe, known internationally as Salt Bae, this restaurant fuses bold flavours with dramatic presentation. Signature dishes like the tomahawk steak and the show-stopping rack of lamb are prepared tableside with finesse, while the elegant interiors create the ideal setting for professional business lunches, impressive client dinners and well-earned evenings out. The Nusr-Et Steakhouse experience extends well beyond the plate, too. From handcrafted cocktails and intuitive service to the famous baklava ice cream show, every moment spent here is designed to impress. The atmosphere strikes a delicate balance between sophistication and just the right amount of energy. Whether you're indulging in the lunch special or going all-in on a signature steak, Nusr-Et Abu Dhabi delivers a meal that's as memorable as it is refined. Advance bookings are highly recommended to guarantee a spot.

The Galleria Level 1, Four Seasons Hotel, Abu Dhabi | +971 2 679 9949 | nusr-et.com.tr

CANTONESE

China Tang, London

Celebrating 20 years this September, China Tang at The Dorchester remains one of London's most iconic Cantonese restaurants, known for its handcrafted dim sum, legendary Peking Duck and glamorous 1930s Shanghai-inspired interiors. Across town, Dim Sum by China Tang brings a curated menu to Harrods' historic Dining Hall, while the newly opened China Tang Dubai at The Lana Promenade introduces the brand's signature elegance to the Middle East. Three destinations, one legacy. China Tang redefines hospitality with its exceptional Cantonese cooking.

The Dorchester, Harrods, The Lana Promenade, Dorchester Collection,
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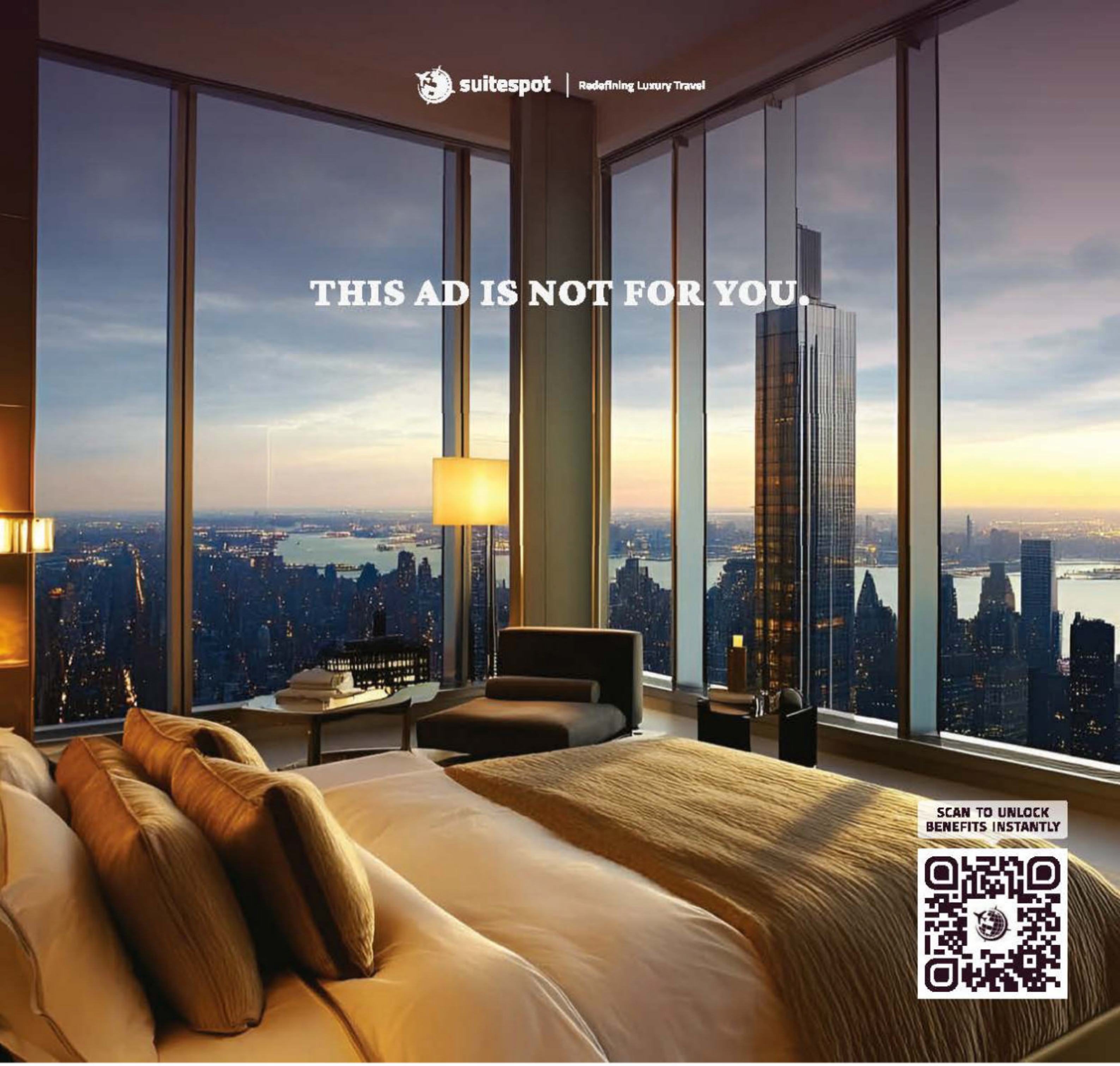
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AIRLINE REVIEW
United Airlines Premium Plus

HOTEL REVIEW
The Ritz-Carlton, Istanbul

CAR REVIEW
Lamborghini Revuelto

Review

Putting business travel to the test

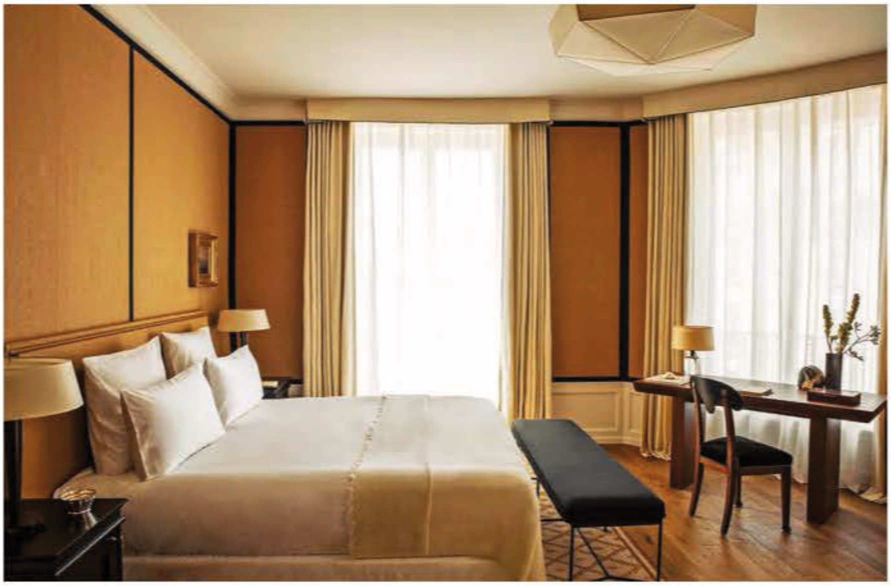
HOTEL REVIEW

Hôtel Balzac, Paris

This Relais & Châteaux property in the French capital combines literary heritage with laidback luxury

HOTEL Review

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER



FROM TOP: Sleek, refined interiors in the Junior Suite; the charming entrance

What's it like?

Set on a quintessentially Parisian corner in the 8th arrondissement, this boutique hotel under the Relais & Châteaux portfolio resembles a private residence – a tribute to its former life as the home of French novelist Honoré de Balzac.

The hotel opened in June 2024 and maintains an air of exclusivity, befitting of its location in a once-gated street reserved for high society. Today, the road – named after the author – is peaceful, despite bridging the hectic Champs-Élysées and Avenue de Friedland. It feels miles away from the crowded Arc de Triomphe on its doorstep.

Inside lies a fashionable lobby with checkerboard tiling, dark wood panelling and retro white sofas. Interiors abide by mid-20th century design, with bespoke furniture by Parisian agency Festen, and a camel and cognac colour scheme.

The laid-back lounge is complete with sofas and armchairs, coffee tables bearing chess boards and fashionable books, and dining tables – the idea being to relax as you would at home, whether for meals, working, or cosying up with a novel. Down a few steps is a sultry, speakeasy-style bar.

Service throughout my stay was exceptional – from an iced tea welcome drink to speedy luggage retrieval upon checkout.

GOOD-TO-KNOW

Hidden in the basement is the Japanese-inspired Ikoi Spa with three treatment rooms, tatami mats, a sauna and plunge pool – plus a small gym with wooden fitness equipment.

Rooms

The hotel features 58 rooms and suites, including two top-floor suites with terraces overlooking the Eiffel Tower. I liked the minimalist design, with sleek lines and neutral furnishings that borrow from Japanese style. My Junior Suite had a spacious lounge featuring velvet sofas, fabric walls that give the appearance of oak panelling, and framed photos with oversized mounts. A silent bedroom environment delivered a perfect night's sleep, and a marble bathroom with large-size Dyptique toiletries added another touch of luxury.

The desk location made for a productive working session thanks to views overlooking the leafy inner courtyard, while writing inspiration included a bookmark featuring a haiku and a newspaper-style room directory.

Also notable is the minibar, housed in a vintage-style wooden cabinet and replete with locally sourced products – from La Brasserie Fondamentale beer to snacks by Maison Plisson and Procope coffee. A crystalware decanter is refilled daily with filtered water, and nightcaps come in the form of ready-made cocktails, with a recipe booklet and cocktail paraphernalia.

Facilities

Rather than a dedicated restaurant, the hotel's lounge doubles as an informal dining space. An à la carte breakfast is served here from 7am-11am (order the pastries, served with jams and spreads from famed patisserie Angelina), while an all-day menu includes highlights such as truffle and Comté croque monsieur. With just a few dining tables, the lounge space did feel a little crowded during busy periods, with some having to dine awkwardly at low coffee tables.

VERDICT

This hotel is a fantastic new chapter for this historic property, providing a tranquil hideaway steps from the Champs-Élysées, with charming nods to its literary roots and local touches.

BEST FOR

Peaceful stays for shopaholics and bookworms alike.

DON'T MISS

A trip down to the secret spa.

PRICE

Rooms start from €550, and Suites start from €950 (not including the nightly €11.38 city tax)

CONTACT

6 Rue Balzac, 75008 Paris; +33 (0)1 44 35 18 00; *hotelbalzac.paris*

IMAGES MATTHIEU SALVAING

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

The Ritz-Carlton, Istanbul

Stadium cheers and waterfront vistas at the glitzy hotel in Turkey's largest city

What's it like?
Fittingly located in the upmarket Dolmabahçe district, the upscale Ritz-Carlton hotel is set on the European side of the Bosphorus. Perched on top of a hill, it overlooks the Beşiktaş stadium (a perk for football fans), while the waterfront can be seen from all floors.

The hotel occupies the first 14 floors of a towering 32-storey building, the upper levels of which are private residences. Amid lower-rise classical buildings, its shining glass facade and lofty height makes it a standout feature of the skyline.

Public areas are grand, with dark-wood panelling, gleaming marble walls and ceilings, plus lots of gold accents. Although the hotel was at 85% capacity when I stayed, it still felt quiet and peaceful, and the pool and gym were empty during my visit.

Staff offered a warm, friendly greeting upon arrival, and guests receive a generous gift on their bed at turndown on a nightly basis – mine included a beautiful blue eye ceramic coaster.

GOOD TO KNOW

The hotel operates a security screening upon entry, but this is common practice for hotels and public buildings in Istanbul.

Rooms
All 239 rooms and suites were updated in 2018 along with the public areas and conference rooms, while its Nobu Suite (to match the namesake ground-floor restaurant) was revamped in 2023. My Front Bosphorus View Room was spacious, with Turkish influences incorporated in the velvety blue headboard with a swirling Iznik tile print, and cobalt blue ceramic artwork.

I slept well thanks to an incredibly comfortable bed and blackout curtains. However, those wanting an early night should be wary that noise from the stadium is loud – there was an early evening fixture when I stayed, and the cheering travelled right into my room.

Other features included a small sofa and a desk with a pop-up charging station. The bathroom was kitted out with trendy Diptyque toiletries and had a separate bathtub and shower.

Facilities
The hotel has five F&B spaces, with Italian venue Limoré the latest to join the pack, having opened at the start of 2025 (don't miss the fried courgette with yoghurt).

I was impressed with the hotel's accommodation of dietary requirements. There was a 'vegan corner' at the buffet breakfast (served at the fine dining Atölye restaurant), plant-based milk alternatives, and allergens were clearly marked on the menu at Limoré.

The Club Lounge on the 12th floor (reserved for those in Club Rooms or Suites) has excellent views of the Bosphorus, plus daily cultural workshops at 4pm – I watched *künefe* (a Turkish dessert of layered filo pastry, sugar and cheese) being made from scratch. All guests can also sample traditional Turkish coffee in the lobby at 4pm.

The hotel also has lots of conference spaces, including a 695 sqm ballroom, though none of them have AV equipment. Leisure facilities include a spa with a Turkish hammam and the aforementioned indoor pool and gym.

VERDICT

A gleaming hotel that offers a taste of Turkish culture, football fans and all.

BEST FOR

Thoughtful service and an excellent culinary offering.

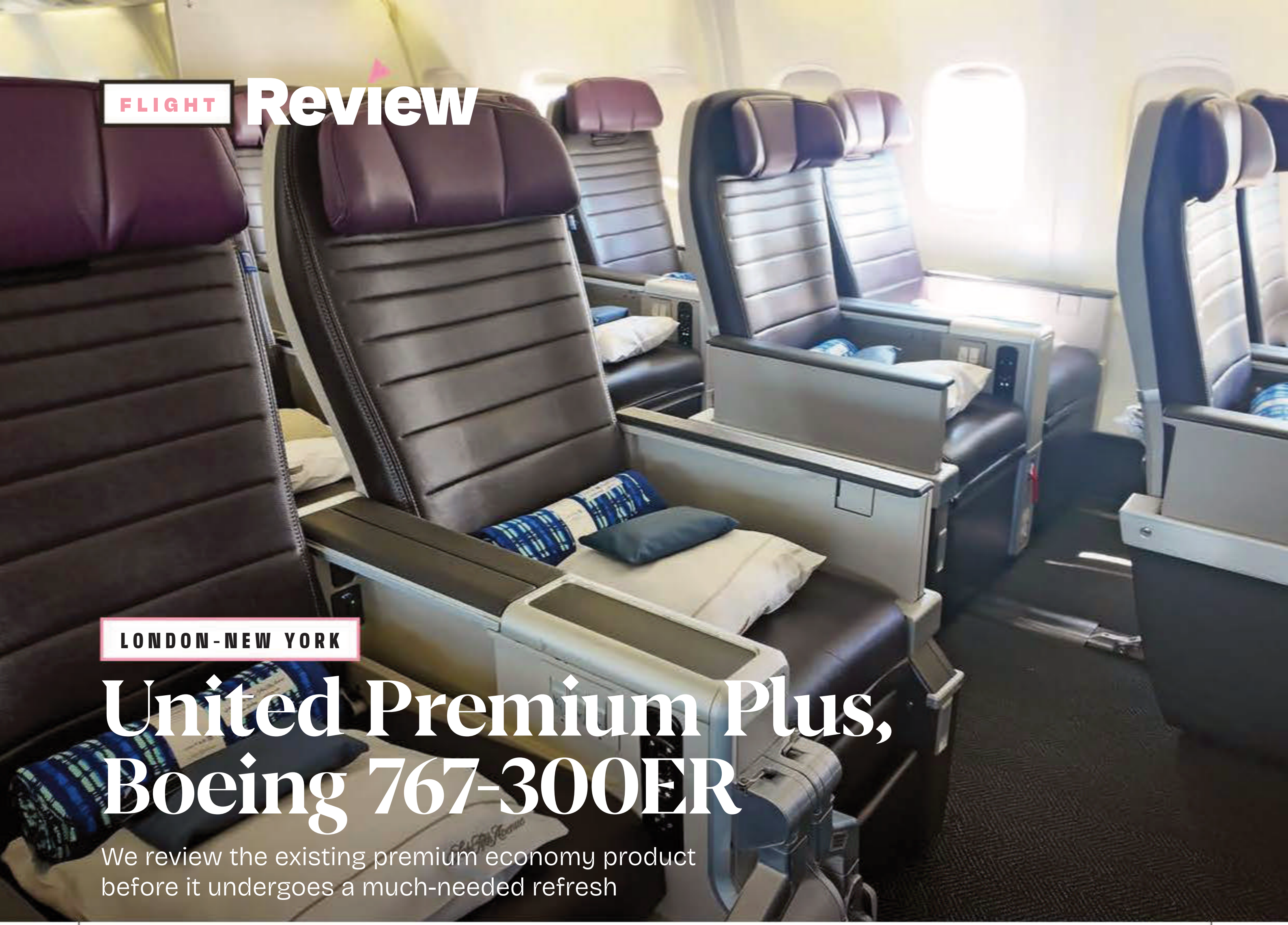
DON'T MISS

Sampling Atölye's baklava, which comes from Turkish city Gaziantep – a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

PRICE
Prices start from £327 per night

CONTACT
Suzer Plaza, Askerocagi
Caddessi, No:6, 34367
Elmadag/Sisli, Istanbul;
+90 212 334 4444;
ritzcarlton.com

IMAGES **2024 MONO PRODUCTION**



LONDON-NEW YORK

United Premium Plus, Boeing 767-300ER

We review the existing premium economy product before it undergoes a much-needed refresh

Background

While heading to the unveiling of United's refreshed Boeing 787 interiors (see page 14), I experienced the airline's Premium Plus cabin on the not-so-fresh 767-300ER from Heathrow to Newark. The aircraft has seen better days, but with United actively rolling out a fleet-wide facelift, this was a fitting "before" to compare with the sparkling "after".

Boarding

I stopped by United's Club Lounge at Heathrow before the flight. It's a bit of an outlier compared to United's lounges in the US, where Club lounges are a step down from the Polaris lounges. But since Heathrow only has one lounge, this one leans closer to Polaris-level quality, especially when it comes to atmosphere and service.

The buffet is similar to what you would find at a No1 or Plaza Premium lounge, with a few hot items and snacks. Where it did feel more premium was the bar – with modern design and on-the-ball staff. Plates were cleared quickly and people enjoyed a glass of fizz with runway views. A far nicer pre-flight experience than elbowing someone over the last hash brown. Despite being fairly busy, there was still plenty of seating. Since I was flying Premium Plus, one-time passes for the lounge can be purchased through the United app for $59 – and honestly, it's worth it. A solid upgrade if you've got time to kill.

Boarding was easy. The flight wasn't full, so it all moved along without any drama. We got the usual polite request to check cabin bags to the hold, which most people declined. The staff asked and didn't push – a much more relaxed vibe than some of the more intense gate experiences I've had elsewhere. (Looking at you, BA Hamburg).

The seat

The Premium Plus cabin is arranged in a 2-2-2 layout with 22 seats in total, separated from Polaris (United's business class offering) by an opaque curtain that looks more like a moral boundary than a physical one. I pre-booked seat 20L (free of charge) – a bulkhead window seat – and was rewarded with enough legroom to stage a modest yoga class. The already generous pitch is enhanced in these front-row seats, and the lack of a seat in front of you means nobody's reclining into your meal or movie.

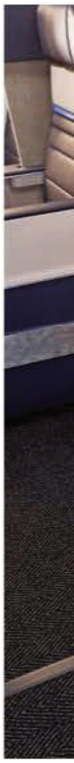
GOOD-TO-KNOW

United has announced a new partnership with Perricone MD for amenity kits going forward, a sign of a more luxurious future for the airline.

The seat has three mechanical movements: recline (respectable), calf rest (fine), and a footrest (which raises your feet just enough to remind you that gravity still applies). Compared to Emirates' premium economy, it falls short, but contrasted with the likes of Norse Atlantic, it's a throne.

In the bulkhead, the 13.3-inch IFE screen and tray table pop out from the armrest. A USB-A charger sits awkwardly under a flap in the middle armrest. It's all very functional, if a little dated. There's unfortunately no wireless charging here – yet. The screen quality is decent, and the controls are responsive, assuming you're not bumping the buttons every time you shift in your seat.

The IFE had a solid offering – none of the films and TV shows were particularly new, but there's ample choice to keep you busy. Now for the amenities. Blanket? Solid. Pillow?



WORDS
OLLIE WILSON

Better than most. Both are furnished by Saks 5th Avenue and certainly aided my mid-flight nap. The airline has also partnered with Therabody (the company behind the Theragun vibrating massage device) to craft a modest (but appreciated) amenity kit complete with socks, an eye mask, tissues, earplugs and a bundle of moisturiser, lip balm and a moist towelette. (See how it compares with other kits on page 48.)

What about the bathroom situation? Officially, there are three at the rear, two at the front, and one behind the Premium Plus curtain – which separates you from Polaris. Do you cross the curtain? Do you shuffle back 20 rows? It's a very British dilemma. I eventually copied the awkward body language of other passengers and took the plunge. The curtain, as it turns out, is more suggestion than rule.

The flight

Service was a strong point throughout the flight. Clark, the crew member running our cabin, had a great balance of calm authority and friendly chatter. It helped that the flight wasn't full, giving the crew room to manage a premium experience instead of a scramble.

The drinks cart rolled through shortly after take-off, with a decent selection of wine, beer, spirits and soft drinks. Sadly there were no pre-departure bubbles, but I survived.

The seven and a half hour flight had two meal services. The first included roast chicken with carrots and potatoes, a leafy salad with sun-dried tomatoes, and a chocolate truffle for dessert. All were served on proper porcelain with United's new cutlery. I found it to be business class adjacent, and the only let-downs were icy butter and a bread roll that could do with a second proofing.

The second service followed just three hours later, which felt rushed. Options included another chicken dish or paneer curry with rice – apparently the same choices as Polaris. I played it safe and took the "pizza roll-up" offered to economy. It arrived hotter than the surface of the sun but was surprisingly yummy once it cooled.

We landed on time, with thankfully speedy queues at immigration. Ironically, my first move in the Big Apple was to grab a slice from Jonny's Pizza in SoHo – which obliterated United's interpretation of pizza, but it's an unfair comparison.

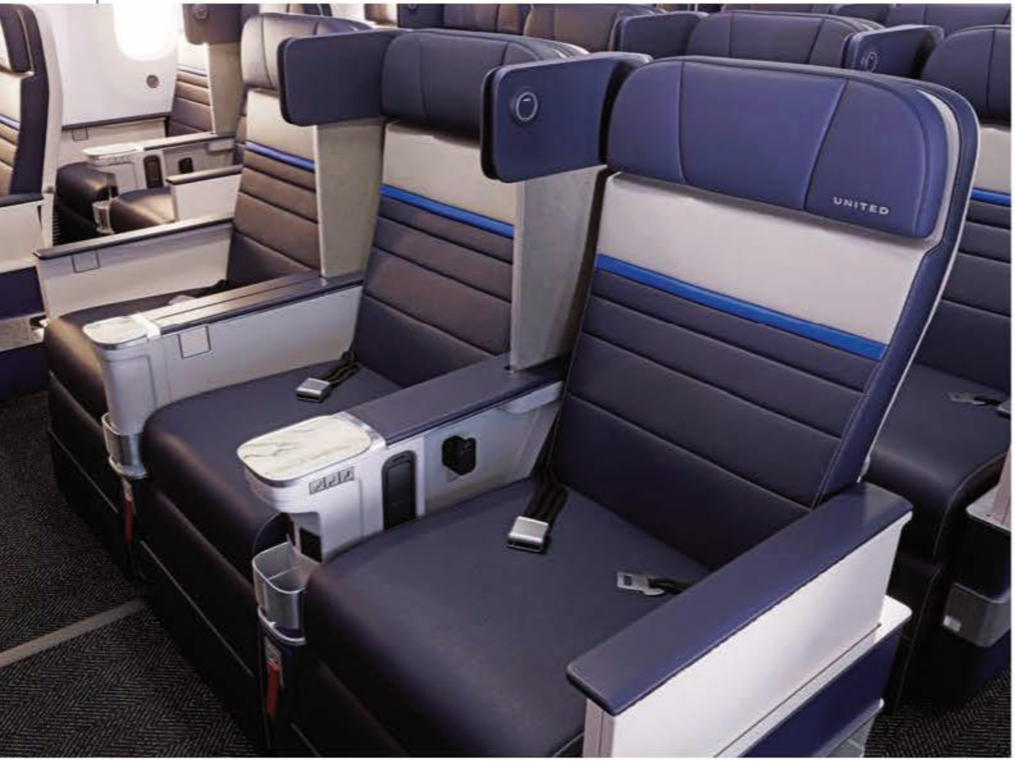
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The existing Premium Plus product; inflight dining; United's forthcoming revamped cabin

> 'The bulkhead window seat had enough legroom to stage a modest yoga class'

the french taste

The future

In New York, I got a sneak peek at what's coming to Premium Plus: more recline, extra padding, a privacy wing to avoid awkward eye contact with your seatmate, a 16-inch 4K OLED screen, and wireless charging built into the seatback. When that rolls out, United's Premium Plus could easily stand shoulder to shoulder with the best in the business.



IMAGES **COURTESY OF UNITED**

VERDICT

United's current Premium Plus isn't going to make your heart sing, but it makes your back and legs thank you. It's a meaningful step up from economy, especially if you land an upgrade or book early. While the cabin lacks polish, the service, space and food lift it out of "just OK" territory. Yes, the aircraft could use some TLC – but thankfully, United knows it. And change is coming.

BEST FOR

If Emirates is the flashier cousin and Virgin Atlantic is the stylish sibling, United's Premium Plus is the pragmatic one — less sparkle, but it gets the job done.

FACTS

FLIGHT DURATION 7 hours 30 minutes
SEAT WIDTH 18.5 inches
SEAT PITCH 38 inches
PRICE Return Premium Plus class fare from Heathrow to Newark start from £4,465.
united.com

WORDS
JEREMY TAYLOR

Lamborghini Revuelto

Lamborghini's new hybrid supercar roars to life

Background

Few cars could match the out-and-out thrills of an Aventador. A ferocious V12 engine and amazing handling made Lamborghini's two-seat supercar the angriest Raging Bull of them all. However, as the brand inevitably shifts to gas-electric propulsion, a replacement was required.

The all-new Revuelto is an Aventador for the modern age – one that still looks spectacular but has morphed into an in-vogue hybrid.

Features

The Revuelto is supported by a tiny 3.8kWH battery and a trio of 145-hp electric motors. Naturally, rather than improved efficiency and greener credentials, the focus is on extra performance. If the 740-hp Aventador was potent, the 1,001-hp Revuelto is simply astonishing.

Wired to its electric backpack, the 6.5-litre engine slingshots this latest Lambo to 62 mph in just 2.5 seconds, then on to 217 mph. That's up there with the best of Bugatti.

A host of improvements to the drivetrain and suspension ensure handling and the ride are best-ever. Most noticeable is the silky gearshift. A boost of power from the battery system eliminates the Aventador's infuriating ability to jolt your head back and forth at every shift.

Each front wheel has a small motor of its own, while the battery pack is fitted between the front seats. If you want to leave home early without disturbing the neighbours, the system is also good for approximately five miles of electric-only range.

The cheapest V12 this side of a Pagani is the sort of supercar that astronauts drive to work, pulling out of the driveway to shouts of, "Godspeed!" Fortunately, you don't need to work for NASA to drive one – just be a very wealthy high-flyer, indeed.

VERDICT

Lamborghini's new V12 flagship is arguably its finest model since the iconic Miura. The only issue is a lengthy waiting list – it's a sellout for a couple of years at least.

PRICE

Price won't be an issue for well-heeled Lamborghini enthusiasts, even at £450,000 before various "must-have" options.

CONTACT

lamborghini.com

DESIGN OF THE TIMES
Lamborghini has updated its styling with a sharply sculpted exterior and a cabin highlighting hexagon shapes

IMAGES **CHARLIE MAGEE PHOTOGRAPHY**

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The Quiz

Kill time before take-off with the new *Business Traveller* quiz

① The word "travel" originates from a word meaning what?
- **A)** Journey
- **B)** Work
- **C)** Live
- **D)** Discover

② What does a Schengen visa allow you to do?
- **A)** Work in the EU
- **B)** Travel between 29 European countries without border checks
- **C)** Stay in any country in Europe for 180 days
- **D)** Avoid customs inspections

③ Which airline alliance includes Korean Air, Kenya Airways, and Vietnam Airlines?
- **A)** Star Alliance
- **B)** Oneworld
- **C)** SkyTeam
- **D)** U-Fly Alliance

④ Which airline currently has the largest fleet size globally?
- **A)** Emirates
- **B)** American Airlines
- **C)** Delta Air Lines
- **D)** United Airlines

⑤ Which of these drinks is typically not caffeinated?
- **A)** Masala chai
- **B)** Matcha
- **C)** Rooibos tea
- **D)** Turkish coffee

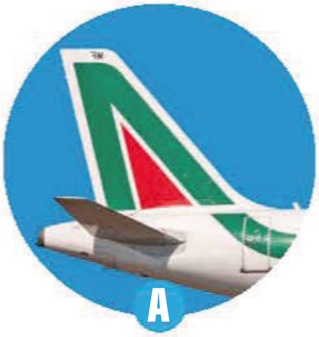
⑥ Which is the largest hotel company in the world?
- **A)** Hilton
- **B)** Marriott International
- **C)** Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
- **D)** Accor

⑦ Which loyalty programme is associated with Turkish Airlines?
- **A)** MileagePlus
- **B)** Miles&Smiles
- **C)** Executive Club
- **D)** SkyMiles

⑧ What did American Airlines introduce in 1946 that changed business travel forever?
- **A)** The first business class seat
- **B)** The frequent flyer programme
- **C)** The first commercial transcontinental flight
- **D)** The first computerised reservation system

LIVERY CHECK

Guess the correct airline from its tail fin



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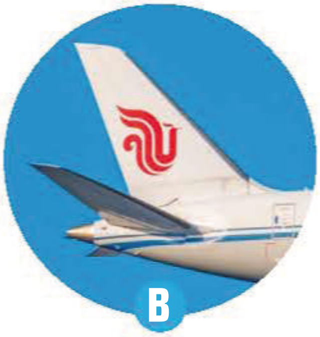

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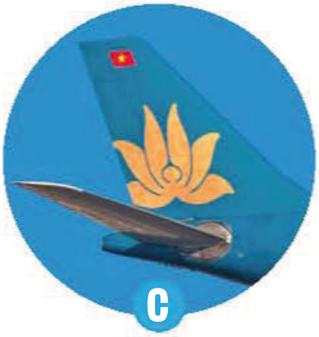
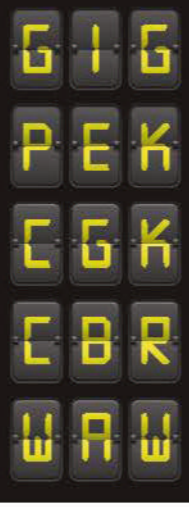


C

AIRPORT CODES

Can you identify the following airports from their IATA code?



GIG
PEK
CGK
CBR
WAW

ANSWERS: 1B, **2**B, **3**C, **4**D, **5**C, **6**B, **7**B, **8**D

Airport codes: Rio de Janeiro, Beijing, Soekarno-Hatta International Airport (Jakarta), Canberra, Warsaw

Livery check: A Alitalia, **B** Air China **C** Vietnam Airlines

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